Brittany and the French State: Cultural, Linguistic, and Political Manifestations of Regionalism in France

DISSERTATION

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Elizabeth C. Bishop, M.A.

Graduate Program in French and Italian

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Dissertation Committee:

Professor Jean-François Fourny, Advisor

Professor Judith Mayne

Professor Jennifer Willging
Abstract

This dissertation is an exploration of regional identity and regional activism, primarily in the context of Brittany. It begins with a background discussion of the Third Republic and opposing political views on the regional languages and cultures of France that emerged during this period. The formation of regional consciousness and the evolution of the Breton language are two issues whose exploration will contribute to an understanding of contemporary Breton regional activism. Analyses of migratory movements, regional stereotypes, and symbolic regional cultural activities will provide a framework by which to explore the formation of regional consciousness. An examination of the vitality, or lack thereof, of the Breton language in France will follow, aided by a comparison of its status with that of other Celtic languages in the United Kingdom and Ireland. A discussion of the ethnic minority group of individuals of North African origins living in France will provide a unique comparison with the regional minority of Brittany. Additionally, an exploration of current political reactions to the immigrant presence in France will reveal that the question of regional identity has resurfaced in an emerging political movement of the extreme right.

This dissertation will illustrate that regionalism in France today has a direct impact on the cultural, linguistic, and political landscape of France and that the study of French regionalism provides insight into the preciously guarded values and institutions of the Republic. Broad themes that will guide this analysis will be the effects of nation-
building on the peoples of France; the influence of minority groups on French national identity and the tension between Republican “universalism” and minority rights; and the education system as a microcosm of French society regarding these issues.
To Keith
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Vita

July 2, 1980..................................................Born – St. Charles, Illinois

2002..............................................................B.A. French, Denison University

2005..............................................................M.A. French, The Ohio State University

Fields of Study

Major Field: French and Italian

Studies in: French Cultural Studies, Twentieth Century French Literature, French Cinema
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Introduction

Signs of regional cultures and languages are visible in France if one simply pauses to take note. Regional languages can be found on bilingual road signs and in immersion schools throughout the country. A fidelity to regional cultural tradition is evidenced by the popularity of local festivals that may include costume, music, and dance. Regional music has been reinvented and has achieved mainstream popularity. Although regional cultures and languages may seem to be simply a part of France’s past, they are still present in contemporary society and are relevant components in how individuals conceive of themselves and others.

What does it mean to say that a French person has a regional identity? France is currently divided into twenty-six regions, twenty-two of which are in Metropolitan France. These regions are contemporary administrative units loosely based on what were once France’s ancient provinces. The provinces of France enjoyed varying degrees of autonomy under the monarchies, and it is important to understand that these provinces were gradually incorporated into France’s territory by battle or diplomacy. The French language and culture were not inherent to the whole of France’s territory; rather, local languages and cultures flourished until interaction with the language and cultural practices of the capital reduced their utility. The provinces were abolished during the Revolution and replaced by departments, but regional languages and cultures survive to
this day, despite their marginalized role. Thus regional identity refers to the attachment one may feel to the local language and/or culture of a particular area of France, often where one was born.

Regionalism in France touches upon many topics, including how French governments have attempted to unite the varying regions of France into one nation, how regionalism first became incorporated into political ideology, how regional consciousness formed among the peoples of various regions in France, how individuals have asserted their regional identity through activism, and how regional languages fit into the linguistic makeup of France today. In order to narrow the scope of this project, I will limit my discussion of regionalism to Brittany whenever possible. I have chosen Brittany for various reasons. Brittany was incorporated into France relatively late compared to other provinces, and until the Revolution it retained special privileges that allowed it greater autonomy. These historical factors have long contributed to a sense of distinction between Brittany and France that has fed regional identity. The regional movement in Brittany contains a significant cultural component, and there was an explosion in popularity of Celtic music and dance during the second half of the twentieth century. The Breton language is an example of a regional language that is in particularly dire circumstances regarding language vitality. These factors all offer interesting frameworks by which to analyze one of France’s regional movements.

If a main goal of this project is to examine various aspects and manifestations of regionalism in France, an understanding of the term will be necessary. To define the term \textit{regionalism}, it is useful to turn to writer and political figure Jean Charles-Brun, who
dedicated a volume to explaining the concept in 1911, when the term was just coming into wider usage. He offers the following overview of the various possible aspects of supporting regionalism:

artistes et gens de goût qui regrettent le pittoresque de nos vieilles provinces françaises; politiques et philosophes qui déplorent le ralentissement de la vie locale, la paresse de l’initiative privée, le développement du fonctionnarisme, l’ingérence constante de l’État dans nos affaires; économistes qui s’alarment de l’exode vers les grands centres ou de la médiocrité de notre outillage national; pédagogues qui réclament une plus intelligente adaptation de notre enseignement aux besoins de ceux qui le reçoivent; et, pour le faire court, tous ceux qui sentent la nécessité d’une réforme organique de la France, même s’ils n’emploient pas le mot, sont d’accord avec les régionalistes sur le fond des choses. (1-2)

Charles-Brun alludes to a critique of centralization on the administrative, social, intellectual, and economic levels. Regionalists may have objected that a centralized administrative structure placed the interests of the capital before the interests of the localities. Rural exodus seemed to disrupt the social and economic structures in place in the provinces. Local art and literature seemed to lose legitimacy under the influence of Parisian cultural output. Transportation such as railroads led to the capital rather than establishing local networks for the movement of goods and people. Thus regionalism was not limited to a specific set of beliefs but encompassed a number of possible issues.

Although the term regionalism was just coming into being at the turn of the twentieth century, the ideas behind the term had already been in existence, especially at the cultural level. For example, the Académie celtique had been active since early in the nineteenth century, uniting intellectuals in the quest for the preservation of the local language and customs, then viewed as folklore. Additionally, Frédéric Mistral founded
the literary association of the *Félibrige* in the mid-nineteenth century to safeguard the Occitan language and local traditions of the south of France. It was not until the Third Republic that regionalism entered into the political arena, notably in association with the right, likely as a response to societal evolutions taking place at this time. Some of these evolutions were initiated by the nation-building efforts propelled by the centralizing tendencies began earlier in the nineteenth century and continued under the Third Republic, while others were simply the results of a country experiencing the effects of modernization.

Charles-Brun maintains that until the term regionalism came into usage, it was mainly the term *decentralization* that had been used to express these types of ideas (3). This term was often used by Charles Maurras, for example, in the development of a monarchist ideology that favored devolution. Early political regionalism’s association with the far right led to disfavor by the public because of its association with xenophobia and an eventual affiliation with the Vichy regime. This association was difficult to overcome until the rebirth of regionalism on the left in concurrence with the events of 1968. Social class, colonialism, and regional struggles entered a shared discourse, and this occurred in tandem with cultural renewal that favored the peasant as the antithesis to the bourgeois but rejected the folklorization of regional cultural elements.

Today regionalism generally refers to the support of one or more of France’s regions on the cultural and/or political level. This may mean advocacy for regional cultural elements such as music or language or the belief that increased autonomy would benefit the regions of France. Some far right ideology today also favors regional identity,
which harks back to the time of Maurice Barrès and Charles Maurras. For some, more radical separatism, such as that in the Basque country and Corsica, falls under the umbrella of regionalism, but mainstream regionalism is generally conceived of as the valorization of France’s regions within the parameters of the French state.

While the study of regionalism, regional culture, regional identity, and regional minorities brings to light a multitude of issues that better our understanding of France today, the incorporation of another type of culture, identity, and minority into the analysis will provide a counterpoint that will allow for a better understanding of the efforts by minorities to find a place in French society: ethnic minorities issued from immigration. Here I will narrow my discussion to the language and culture of North African immigrants and their descendants. I have chosen this group because they are the largest immigrant group in France, and their presence has made lasting impacts on French society in many ways. As non-European immigrants, the contrast between secular French culture and the religious and cultural practices of this group are especially difficult for some French citizens to reconcile. This group has sparked debate regarding integration and national identity and elicited strong political reactions, notably from groups on the extreme right. In short, a discussion of any type of minority in France would be incomplete without mention of this group.

In discussing regional and ethnic minorities and how these groups fit into the political, social, and cultural life of France, there is inevitable overlap with how particular political groups conceive of the French nation. Thus an understanding of the term nationalism as it will be used in this project is important. Nationalism has varying
interpretations, and I will rely on Michel Winock’s categorizations of the term for clarification. The first use of nationalism will be in reference to the Breton nationalist movement affiliated with the Parti nationaliste breton during the interwar period and second world war. This type of nationalism falls under the category described by Winock as simply “the nationalism of peoples who aspire to create a sovereign nation-state” (5). Breton nationalists did aspire to create a sovereign nation-state by way of affiliation with the Germans during World War II, efforts which did not end well.

The second use of the term nationalism in this project will be in describing the ideologies of the far right, such as those of Maurice Barrès and Charles Maurras during the Third Republic and that of the Front national during the last several decades. Winock writes that this term “has been used, especially since the Dreyfus affair, to label the diverse doctrines that, in an already constituted state, subordinate everything to the exclusive interests of the nation, that is, the nation-state: to its force, its power, and its greatness” (6). Winock further classifies this type of nationalism, and in regards to the far right of the Third Republic, the category of conservative nationalism would also apply. Conservative nationalism stemmed from the anti-Dreyfusard movement, in which Barrès and Maurras took part. According to conservative nationalism, “France was threatened with death, undermined from within by its parliamentary institutions, by economic and social upheaval (‘the Jew’s hand’ in it was always denounced), the degradation of the old society, the ruin of the family, de-Christianization” (13). Solutions were seen in state authority and the army for example, and xenophobia and antiparliamentarianism were freely expressed.
Another categorization of nationalism would also apply to both the far right of the Third Republic and the *Front national* of today: closed nationalism. Winock describes this nationalism as “France for the French” nationalism that emerges in times of perceived crisis such as the Dreyfus affair, decolonization, and economic depression (24). “It is a closed, frightened, exclusivist nationalism that defines the nation by eliminating the intruders—Jews, immigrants, revolutionaries” (25). This type of nationalism is the expression of an opposition to diversity and is often the result of fear and scapegoating. This category of nationalism would apply to both the nationalism of Barrès and Maurras, whose conception of the French nation did not include Jews and foreigners. This type of nationalism would also describe the FN, which views unassimilated immigrants as contributing to many of France’s problems.

What I propose in this project is an exploration of Breton regional identity and regional activism, taking into consideration the formation of regional consciousness and the current situation of the Breton language. A discussion of the Third Republic and opposing political views on the regional languages and cultures of France will prepare this analysis. A discussion of the ethnic minority group of individuals of North African origins living in France will provide a unique comparison with regional minority groups. Additionally I will explore current political reactions to the immigrant presence in France, primarily movements of the extreme right, within which the question of regional identity will resurface. Broad themes that will guide this analysis will be the effects of nation-building on the peoples of France, how the Republic accommodates minority
groups and their languages, how minority groups influence French national identity, and how the education system acts as a microcosm of French society concerning these issues.

Chapter one will focus on the period of the Third Republic, providing an analysis of two opposing views of the regional languages and cultures of France: the indifference of the republicans in power and the affinity of the far right. I will demonstrate how the republicans of this period used the education system as a primary tool in their project to unify the French citizenry and show the mostly negative effects this process had on regional languages and cultures. I will also discuss the ideologies of Maurice Barrès and Charles Maurras in order to demonstrate how regionalism became politicized, a side effect of which was the association of regionalism with the more controversial aspects of the far right. My goal will be to provide a historical foundation for understanding the development of regional consciousness, contemporary local regional activism, and current nationalist extreme right groups.

Chapter two will explore the development of Breton regional consciousness, primarily through three factors: migratory movements, regional stereotypes, and regional symbolic activities. I will demonstrate how migratory movements heightened regional awareness through the interaction of regional inhabitants with greater France. In order to analyze regional stereotypes, I will take the bande dessinée Bécassine as a case study in the representation and dissemination of stereotypes of the Breton people. Regional symbolic activities in Brittany often take the form of cultural expression such as music and dance, thus I will provide an analysis of the Breton singer and musician Alan Stivell, whose songs and writings provide insight into the ideology surrounding the Breton
regionalist movement and cultural renaissance that took place during the 1960’s and 1970’s. The end goal of this chapter will be an understanding of the Breton regional movement, known as the emsav. The emsav’s evolution, underlying ideology, and links to leftist politics reveals a movement that is relevant to the lives of many individuals in France, both those nostalgic for a Brittany of the past in addition to those envisioning Brittany’s future role in contemporary Europe.

Chapter three will treat the linguistic aspects of the Breton regional movement with a focus on language activism. I will present the current state of Breton language use and the role of schooling in efforts for language preservation and revival, notably the systems of bilingual Breton/French schooling and the Breton-language immersion schools known as Diwan. I will examine why these schools are unique in French education system and their potential for increasing the base of present-day Breton speakers. I will also discuss the new standardized Breton and explore its role as the future of the language. A comparison of Breton with the Celtic languages of the United Kingdom and Ireland will shed light on how Breton’s status as a regional language of France has affected its current vitality in terms of language use and role in society. I will also discuss recent legislation concerning regional languages and the possible effects on these new educational structures. My goal will be an understanding of the Breton language’s current role in Brittany and France and why a language that some consider to be en route to extinction may be able to avoid this fate through a new standardized form with renewed, if different, cultural value.
Chapter four will bring a different type of minority group into this discussion as a counterpoint to regional minorities: those with North African origins. My first focus will be on the Arabic language’s role in French society and the French education system, and a comparison of Arabic and Breton will illustrate that despite the fact that both are officially labeled *langues de France*, they seem to follow opposing linguistic trajectories. Breton is threatened while Arabic flourishes, even though Breton’s homeland is within the French territory and Arabic is issued from immigration. My second focus will be Islam’s role in French society and the French education system, and a comparison between the new Muslim schools in France and the Diwan system will reveal how France’s commitment to republican values has limited the ability of public schools to accommodate the needs of French citizens. I will also discuss current political reactions to the presence of this Arab minority in France, taking into consideration groups on the extreme right such the *Front national* and the emerging *Identitaire* movement. The *Identitaires* will provide an especially interesting case study as an emerging radical political movement that combines the issues of immigration and regional identity, using regional identity to battle the new perceived threats of Islam and immigration.

Regional cultures and languages may seem to have relatively little impact in a French society whose more visible minority groups have origins outside of the Hexagon, a society that must face the onslaught of American culture in today’s global community, a society that has undergone its own evolutions of identity as part of the European Union.
However, this project will illustrate that regionalism in France today has direct impacts on the cultural, linguistic, and political landscapes of France and is a useful tool for insight into the previously guarded values and institutions of the Republic.

\[1\] Regional languages are defined by the Délégation générale à la langue française et aux langues de France as “langues parlées sur une partie du territoire national depuis plus longtemps que le français” (2).
Chapter 1: Regionalism and Politics during the Third Republic

The Third Republic was a time of significant political and social change for France, spurred by new policies instituted by the republicans in addition to the effects of a continued modernization that had been taking place throughout the nineteenth century. It was a critical time in the formation of French national identity for many reasons. For example, France was in the wake of defeat in the Franco-Prussian War; the new colonial empire was solidified; and church/state relations reached a critical point. Additionally, this period witnessed the development of varying political ideologies, notably the republicans in power and the components of the new far right, such as the Action française, each with different conceptions of French identity and the French nation. In referring to the Third Republic as a time of “disappearing peasants and threatened regionalisms,” Herman Lebovics also identifies the important role that regional identity played in this time of evolving national identity (7-8).

The value of regional cultures and regional identity was interpreted very differently by the republicans and the far right of this period. However, it seems that both groups’ conceptions of the French nation and the role of regional cultures therein were in part the result of France’s military defeat in 1870. The republicans viewed the loss as a failure of France’s governmental institutions, especially the education system. The unification of the French citizenry became essential, a process that was started by the
monarchy and continued by the Revolution and Napoleon Bonaparte, and the republicans thought the best way to incorporate the citizens into the Republic was through the education system. Regional cultural differences became of secondary importance to a national culture, and regional languages were an obstacle to this national acculturating. Additionally, overcoming the church’s domination in the educational arena meant weakening regional language use, as it was a vehicle for the church’s influence.

For the new factions of the far right, or the “new right,” France’s military defeat spurred a desire for revenge against the Germans and the recovery of the lost regions of Alsace and Lorraine. Figures such as Maurice Barrès and Charles Maurras articulated political ideologies that favored regional cultures as the authentic building blocks of a national culture. They also advocated a decentralized governmental system that preserved regional power, which was contrary to the centralizing tendencies of the Republic. Regionalism progressed into the political scene at the time of the new right whereas before it had largely been a cultural phenomenon. The new right offered a conception of the French nation that was in opposition to that of the Republic; an opposition that can be conceived of as the search for the pays réel rather than the pays légal (Lebovics 136).

In this chapter I will demonstrate how the republicans’ goals during this time were adopted into the education system and why the scapegoating of the republicans by contemporary regional activists for the destruction of regional language and cultures is a skewed interpretation of this complex period. I will also explore the contrasting views of the far right and the advent of political regionalism. An examination of these two views
of the regions of France sets an important foundation for understanding the political and cultural climate for the formation of early local regionalist groups in addition to contemporary regional activism. Since my focus is narrowed to the region of Brittany throughout this project, I will provide examples of how the republican reforms affected inhabitants of Brittany and also how both republicanism and the new right were received in the region. I will also show that rightist ideology affected the doctrine of early Breton political regionalist groups. In the early manifestations of Breton activism, regional consciousness was primarily a realization of the elite and regionalist thought was linked to vastly different forms of political ideology than it is today. This period is especially important because of the lasting effects it had on France’s collective memory regarding regionalist activity in Brittany and its downfalls.

1.1 Precursors of the Third Republic

The period of the Third Republic is characterized by Eugen Weber as a time when the peasantry was integrated into France by a “process of acculturation: the civilization of the French by urban France, the disintegration of local cultures by modernity and their absorption into the dominant civilization of Paris and the schools” (486). Weber identifies factors such as the education system, military service, roads and railroads, and the circulation of money, goods, and the printed word as creating a sense of community among the disparate inhabitants of France who up until this period probably identified very little with the French state. These factors did have lasting effects on the regional populations of France and the consolidation of a French nation, and the ideologies and
policies of the republicans in office had a key role in these processes. However, efforts to unify the French nation based on conceptualizations of its various regions were not unique to the Third Republic; rather, what happened during the Third Republic was the continued growth of roots that had already sprouted earlier in the nineteenth century.

Prior to the Revolution, allegiance to one king served as an important unifying element in a France with such varying regional cultures and languages; during the First Republic, language came to be viewed as an integral factor in the creation of a national identity, and linguistic uniformity became a cultural and political goal. At the end of the eighteenth century, only three million Frenchmen spoke French exclusively; sixteen million were bilingual speakers of French and their regional language; and six million were non-francophone (Plenel 285). Republicans abbé Henri Baptiste Grégoire and Bertrand Barère both made particular efforts to propagate the French language during the First Republic, publishing reports advocating the eradication of France’s regional tongues. They viewed the existence of patois as interesting but dangerous to the new French state, especially in rural areas of France where priests sometimes refused to acknowledge the new constitution. For example, one of Barère’s more notorious statements in the Rapport du comité de salut public sur les idiomes of 1794 is: “Le fédéralisme et la superstition parlent bas-breton; l’émigration et la haine de la République parlent allemand; la contre-révolution parle l’italien, et le fanatisme parle le basque. Cassons ces instruments de dommage et d’erreur” (qtd. in de Certeau, Julia, and Revel 326). If regional languages kept French citizens from learning about the new Republic, then they were considered counterrevolutionary.
Regarding this new role of the French language as a tool for forging national identity, Ford explains that “the eradication of local languages was a logical extension of a democratic project designed to erase the historical memory of monarchy and oppression with a new calendar, revolutionary festivals, a new religion, new administrative units, and a single language” (15). Thus the French language was considered an important element of republicans’ plans to form a nation in post-Revolutionary France. Obviously regional languages were not eradicated as abbé Grégoire and Barère advocated, in part due to the short life of the First Republic, but their specific views regarding regional languages had been introduced to the public through the political arena.

Although the question of language was not as fundamental during the Consulate and Empire as it was during the First Republic, Napoleon Bonaparte in many ways continued the efforts of the revolutionaries by creating a secular, privilege-free, and politically-centralized state. Nation-building was achieved through the establishment of order and hierarchy, and all of France was uniformly incorporated into the administrative system. For example, Napoleon unified weights and measures by supporting the adoption of the metric system and steadily converted the country to the French franc. The prefects of each department were representatives of the central government with little autonomy, and obligatory military service was instituted. Napoleon created the lycée and centralized the educational system so the future citizens could learn the laws and ideals of the new institutions, which were taught in French and Latin. The Napoleonic Code was applied nationally in all corners of the country, unlike the laws of the Ancien Regime which applied in varying degrees to different regions of the French territory. In fact,
these policies had a lasting impact not only in France but also in many of the European nations involved in the Napoleonic Wars. In summary, Napoleon made significant impacts in the formation of the French nation through the systematic application of his new policies; the regions of France were not viewed as disparate territories to be reigned in, but simply as the terrain in which the radiating policies of a centralized administration would be applied.

1.2 The Republicans

The privileging of the French language during the First Republic and the unifying and centralizing policies of Napoleon Bonaparte serve as notable precursors to an understanding of the policies enacted to continue the nation-building process and the conceptions of regional languages and cultures in relation to national identity during the Third Republic. When the leftist republicans came into power in the late 1870’s, there was a renewed interest in linguistic unification of France that went hand in hand with reform of the education system. The leaders of the Third Republic found themselves in the aftermath of military defeat in the Franco-Prussian War, and one of the scapegoats for defeat was the inferiority of the French education system: “c’est l’instituteur prussien qui a gagné la guerre” (Prost 184). Education came to be viewed as a way to spread the tenets of republicanism and gain support for the government, and one of the ways to do that was through the spread of the French language.

Some believe that the Third Republic used education reform primarily to destroy regional languages, much as the leaders of the First Republic desired, but there are other
factors to take into consideration when analyzing the goals of the republican leaders. It was more likely that the propagation of the French language was only one part of the integration of disparate regional populations into the Republic. Ford characterizes the drive for linguistic unity during this period as a part of the mission civilisatrice whereby republicans desired to tame an unenlightened and backward France (17). This is also related to Weber’s evaluation that peasants during the period “had to be taught manners, morals, literacy, a knowledge of French, and of France, a sense of the legal and institutional structure beyond their immediate community” (5). Thus it will be useful to explore some of the ideology of the republican leaders to better understand their goals. It should also be noted that winning over loyalty to the Republic meant winning loyalty away from the church and other conservative elites, and up until this time primary education was largely controlled by the clergy. All of these factors helped set the context for how education reform and linguistic unity became tied to conceptions of the French nation for the leaders of the Third Republic.

In 1882, philosopher and writer Ernest Renan discussed the concept of the nation in an influential lecture at the Sorbonne. Renan considered the nation to be a function of spiritual principles: “Avoir fait des gloires communes dans le passé, une volonté commune dans le présent; avoir fait de grandes choses ensemble, vouloir en faire encore, voilà la condition essentielle pour être un peuple” (26). Renan believed that neither race, language or religion were the determining factors of a nation; rather, “Une grande agrégation d’hommes, saine d’esprit et chaude de cœur, crée une conscience morale qui s’appelle une nation” (29). Renan’s emphasis of a French nation based on common
consent likely impacted the current republican leaders, whose nation-building efforts reflected a vision of a politically-based unity, including the idea that the disparate regional populations could and should be incorporated as one under the Republic. However, this grande agrégation d’hommes that would form the nation first needed the requisite civic awareness, and one of the ways to spread this awareness was through the education system.

1.2a Education Reform

The most notable aspects of education reform took place in 1881 and 1882, with the institution of free, compulsory, and secular state-run primary education. These laws were championed by Jules Ferry, who held various offices during the 1880’s, including Prime Minister, Minister of Public Instruction, and Minister of Foreign Affairs. Passing these laws that created l’école gratuite, obligatoire et laïque was a victory for the leftist republicans against the monarchists who had largely been in power the previous decade. Prost remarks that this period was largely imbued with the collective ideal that an education could lead to a better life, and what was so notable about these reforms was that the republicans made primary education a public service (191-92). Thus education became something to which citizens had a right and for which the state was responsible for providing. Additionally, by providing a large segment of the population with this means to social mobility, the republicans were also creating a bourgeoisie that was loyal to republican values.
In sum, primary education was made a free service and thus available to all children regardless of their families’ abilities to pay for schooling; schooling became required for all children ages seven to thirteen; and religious education was removed from public schools. For Ferry, the principles of free, compulsory, and secular education were essential components of democracy. As he stated in an 1870 discourse on the equality of education:

L’inégalité d’éducation est, en effet, un des résultants les plus criants et les plus fâcheux, au point de vue social, du hasard de la naissance. Avec l’inégalité d’éducation, je vous défie d’avoir jamais l’égalité des droits, non l’égalité théorique, mais l’égalité réelle, et l’égalité des droits est pourtant le fond même et l’essence de la démocratie. . . .

A un autre point de vue, l’inégalité d’éducation est le plus grand obstacle que puisse rencontrer la création de mœurs vraiment démocratiques. (qtd. in Legrand 220-21)

For Ferry, equal access to education is a foundation of equal rights, which are a foundation of the democratic principles necessary in a society without class-based privileges.

The most highly-debated aspect of Ferry’s reforms was the secularization of public education and the replacement of religious education with *l’instruction civique et morale*. Conservative Catholics in opposition to Ferry did not believe that morality could exist independent of religious doctrine. It should be noted that Ferry was not directly opposed to religious education, but believed a civic morality was the appropriate counterpart in the public sphere. Legrand analyzes this reform in the broader context of a secular Republic: “cette sécularisation des grandes fonctions sociales est un principe qui découle de deux exigences complémentaires de l’idéal républicain: l’égalité en droit et la
liberté des consciences” (140). Thus secular education was a logical and necessary step given the privileged role education held in Ferry’s concept of a democratic Republic.

An important part of civic morality was instilling in students a sense of loyalty to the Republic; the curriculum of public schools instilled national and patriotic sentiment and educated the young citizenry on why such things as taxes and military service were important parts of being good Frenchmen. Plenel states, “On a pu dire que, dans l’école républicaine, la patrie remplace le Dieu des écoles congrégationistes. Le patriotisme donne son unité à l’enseignement laïque” (286). This idea of the motherland had additional significance because it created a sense of belonging to one common native soil for all the inhabitants of France, regardless of their region of origin. In 1884, the Tribune des instituteurs et des institutrices addressed a teacher’s role in the process of instilling patriotism: “Faire des patriotes sincères, tel est encore notre but en enseignant l’histoire de la France; faire des citoyens, tel est notre idéal en donnant l’enseignement civique. Il n’est pas jusqu’à notre langue, langue harmonieuse, douce et claire entre toutes, qui ne vienne dire au jeune Français: sois fier de la France et aime-la par-dessus tout” (qtd. in Plenel 287). It would be safe to conclude from this passage that teaching in public schools was considered by many a noble undertaking and teachers were often considered direct representatives of the Republic.

As mentioned above, the teaching of France’s history was an important component in the formation of patriots. Following the Ferry reforms, a more uniform national curriculum was instituted that emphasized a general French history rather than local focus specific to particular regions. One of the most well known texts used in the
school system from its publication in 1877 through the first part of the twentieth century is *Le tour de la France par deux enfants*, written by Augustine Fouillée under the pseudonym G. Bruno. Between the years 1877 and 1900, over eight million copies were sold (Weber 335). The story is of two orphaned brothers, André and Julien, who leave Alsace after the death of their father and search much of France for remaining relatives, but the pedagogical goals of the tale were to inspire patriotism, responsibility, and morality in its young readers.

The story is imbued with a strong devotion to the Republic; for example, when the boys’ father passes away, his last utterance is “France!,” and the boys promise to leave Alsace to become “les enfants de la France” (7). It is important to note that at the time, Alsace had been annexed by Germany following the Franco-Prussian War; thus added to the story is a reference to the suffering of Frenchmen who had been separated from their homeland. The arrival of the protagonists onto French soil is a marked event; when the boys cross the border from Alsace into France at the beginning of their journey, they fall to their knees and cry, “France aimée, nous sommes tes enfants, et nous voulons devenir dignes de toi!” (16). The two lessons meant to be imparted by the story that the author has deemed essential in the creation of good French citizens and patriots can be found explicitly stated in the last sentence, after the journey has ended and the brothers are living happily on a farm with an uncle: “ils resteront toujours fidèles à ces deux grandes choses qu’ils ont appris si jeunes à aimer: Devoir et Patrie” (150).

The book’s treatment of French history is a useful illustration of the desire to create a common national history with which all citizens would identify. For example,
when Julien learns the story of Joan of Arc from the elderly woman with whom the brothers are lodging, she concludes with these remarks: “Jeanne d’Arc, mon enfant, est l’une des gloires les plus pures de la patrie. . . . Aucune nation n’a eu une héroïne qui puisse se comparer à cette humble paysanne de Lorraine, à cette noble fille du peuple de France” (32). Julien later reads to a friend about the Gauls from his book on *les hommes illustres de la France*:

> La France, notre patrie, était, il y a bien longtemps de cela, presque entièrement couverte de grandes forêts. Elle s’appelait alors la Gaule, et les hommes à demi sauvages qui l’habitaient étaient les Gaulois.
> Nos ancêtres, les Gaulois, étaient grands et robustes, avec une peau blanche comme le lait, des yeux bleus et de longs cheveux blonds ou roux qu’ils laissaient flotter sur leurs épaules. (62)

The presentation of Joan of Arc as the pride of the motherland and the Gauls as common ancestors are examples indicative of the framing of French history as a unifying force to which all French citizens were meant to identify and claim as their own. Many scholars, such as Plenel, characterize this history as a myth: “L’histoire est retaillée à la mesure de ce nationalisme exacerbé. De Vercingétorix aux conquêtes napoléoniennes, en passant par Clovis et Jeanne d’Arc, c’est un récit sans rupture, la saga uniforme d’une même nation . . .” (287). While these aspects of French history apply more accurately to some parts of France than others, this strategy was viewed by republicans as a way to fulfill the goals of creating young patriots instilled with civic morality in the *écoles laïques*.

It is important not to overlook the fact that state control of education meant a loss of power for the church, which had traditionally exercised authority in this area of Frenchmen’s lives. Allegiance that was directed toward the church was now shifting to the Republic. Many villages saw an opposition forming of the priest versus the teacher,
symbols of new and old authority. Ford deems that the “far-reaching campaign to secularize and republicanize the countryside through an ambitious system of universal, compulsory primary education” of the republican leadership had the purpose of destroying the political influence of the church and those that opposed the Republic in the many regions of France (19). These general allegiances were also seen under the previous regime; Napoleon III allied himself with the church and drew strong support from the countryside, as cities were perceived as the source of socialist and republican opposition. Rural support for Napoleon stemmed from both the influence of the church and perhaps other factors such as a rebound in the agricultural economy that had suffered during the Second Republic (Alguhon, Désert, and Specklin 360-61).

The importance on the propagation of the French language in the public schools was to serve the purpose not only of integrating non-francophone peasants into the political life of the Republic but also of weakening the local languages, which were the primary vehicles for the church’s message, consequently undermining the church’s authority. Catechism was often a bastion of local languages, and priests depended on local speech to keep reigns on the faithful of the community and hold onto waning power. The official separation of church and state did not occur until 1905, but in 1903 it was decreed that religious instruction was no longer authorized in Breton, Basque, Flemish, and Provencal. Ford views this decree as symbolic of the republicans’ goal for cultural unity that sought to create common cultural references in order to eradicate cultural differences in the Republic (27). These manifestations of the conflict between church
and state had considerable effects on the regional languages, which fell under the umbrella of cultural differences that were not conducive to republican unity.

Rivaled in importance perhaps only by military service, public schools were most instrumental in the propagation of the French language during the Third Republic, as French was the only language authorized in these institutions. One of the challenges facing the new public schools was how to teach French to children who did not know the language. According to an 1863 study by the Ministry of Public Education, a fifth of the population in France did not speak French, and actual numbers were likely larger if those who with only marginal knowledge were included (Weber 310). In the new village schools, children were forbidden to speak *patois*, and Weber notes the irony that “The oft-repeated claim that they were learning their mother tongue could hardly have rung true to those whose mothers did not understand a word of it” (310). A common reprimand at the time for speaking one’s regional tongue at school was the use of the *symbole*, which has lived notoriously in the memories of contemporary regional language activists as a humiliating and destructive punishment. A child caught speaking in their regional tongue was given a token, which in Brittany for example was an old shoe hung around the neck. If that student caught another student speaking in their regional tongue, he or she passed on the token. The student stuck with the token at the end of the school day received some sort of punishment.
1.2b Education Reform in Brittany

To give some of the effects of education reform on regional populations a specific context, it would be useful to examine local accounts from Brittany. For example, Breton literary figure Pierre-Jakez Hélias writes of his experience in the public school system in the first part of the twentieth century. He grew up a child of peasants in the pays bigouden area of Finistère, and was one of the many children throughout France who experienced the challenges of being educated in French, a different language than the one that was spoken at home and in the village. He tells of the punishments facing those at school who spoke Breton in addition to the reactions of the Breton-speaking parents:

> When one of us was punished for having allowed his mother tongue to be heard in the enclosure reserved for speaking French, he either got it in the neck with a peculiar or an irregular verb, or he had to stand in the corner behind the black board after his friends had left, and could count on another punishment awaiting him at home. His father and mother, who probably didn’t understand a word of French, after having given him a good thrashing, would reproach him bitterly for being a disgrace of the family. . . . (148)

According to Hélias’ experiences, even a student’s parents who did not speak French were resolute that their child would learn it, or at least earn the elementary-level diploma.

He also explains that members of his parents’ generation were humiliated at times when they needed to deal with civil servants in the cities and did not speak French. This also strengthened the support for their children learning the “language of the bourgeoisie” (151). Undoubtedly many these children experienced a disconnect between their school and family lives, since they were conducted in two different languages, but there were obvious advantages to learning the language of the Republic. Besides avoiding the humiliation suffered by some of the earlier generations, learning French afforded one
different work opportunities if it was ever decided to leave the local village and move to a larger town in search of work. French allowed for the ability to communicate with the world outside of one’s local region.

In fact, in André Burguière’s study of Plozévet, a village near the one where Hélias grew up, he comments on the differing views held on the function of education: “Pour les leaders [républicains] et les enseignants sa fonction est avant tout politique: fabriquer des citoyens républicains. Pour la masse des Plozévétiens, elle est sociale: donner une instruction générale qui permette aux jeunes de s’arracher à la misère paysanne et d’émigrer dans de bonnes conditions” (284). According to Burguière’s interpretations, a direct advantage of learning French for the villagers was the ability to leave one’s village for a larger town or city. One of the conflicts felt by local leaders, however, was that the instruction générale of the schools that would allow for possible emigration was at the expense of the local region, which would better profit from an education focused on practical information conducive to strengthening the local economy and agriculture (276-79). Weber also recognizes this discrepancy, stating that while manual labor was glorified as a moral value in the school system, it was also portrayed as the resort of the uneducated (338). Thus the republicans’ goals in the sphere of education were focused on incorporating the peasant into the Republic through largely ideological means, which did not necessarily take into account the everyday challenges faced by the agriculturally-based peasant populations.

It was true that schooling during the Third Republic brought the prospect of social mobility that was previously unattainable to a large segment of the population, and a
significant reason was the acquisition of the French language. Hélias tells of the ongoing argument in his village between the Reds, or those who were pro-Republic, and the Whites, or those who were pro-church, on why the government wanted the Bretons to learn French. The Whites argued that it was so the children of Lower Brittany could be sent off to Paris to be servants to the bourgeoisie, while the Reds retorted that knowledge of French would allow their children to rise above the rank of servant, and even if not, they would still earn more money in Paris than they would by staying in Brittany. Interestingly enough, however, ―neither the Reds nor the Whites ever argued about the fact that it was necessary to learn French then and there,‖ despite their ongoing debates (150). Thus although French was a difficult but obligatory part of the curriculum of the public schools, it was viewed by many peasants as an inevitable part of their future and an important tool for their children’s success in life.

To borrow Weber’s terminology, schooling during the Third Republic could be considered a “major agent of acculturation” that molded individuals to fit into a French society larger than their own regional one (330-31). Students learned the language of the Republic in addition to a new set of cultural referents that would allow for connections among inhabitants of the various regions of France. For these inhabitants, schooling was both a great opportunity but at times an alienating force; children whose parents did not speak French lived lives in which the public and private spheres came to be conducted in different languages. Additionally, one of the effects of an education whose goal was to create the awareness of a Republic in which lived a united citizenry was the increased
likelihood that one would eventually leave his isolated native village and venture out into that Republic for new opportunities.

The republicans of the left were clearly motivated by a desire to create a citizenry and incorporate all Frenchmen into the political life of the Republic. The creation of a sense of a common history supporting a contemporary patriotism was a means to a common culture complete with common cultural referents. The French language was central to this process; linguistic unity was needed to fully integrate the regional masses into French life and allow them to participate in the public sphere. One of the principal vehicles used to achieve these goals was the education system, especially the newly-minted primary education that was free, secular, and required for all children of the Republic. The French language did spread, and regional languages inevitably did go into decline, but the leaders of the Third Republic did not declare a war on regional languages like their predecessors of the First Republic. Rather, the propagation of French seemed to be their goal, and any resultant negative effects on regional languages and cultures were simply collateral damage.

1.3 The New Right

As the turn of the century neared, new political ideologies were taking shape in France with quite differing attitudes toward regional languages and cultures. In the late 1870’s, the leftist republicans took over power from the monarchists, which seemed to cement the staying power of the Third Republic. However, there was still a significant minority in the country opposed to the Republic, which included aristocracy, clergy,
middle-class conservatives, and peasants who were dependant on landowning nobility or priests for their political information (Tannenbaum 5). The right that emerged during the 1880’s and 1890’s is often characterized as a “new right” that was nationalist and revolutionary in nature.¹ Rémond identifies nationalism as the defining characteristic of the new right, stating that “[le nationalisme] transfère de gauche à droite tout un ensemble de notions, de sentiments et de valeurs jusqu’ici tenues pour l’apanage du radicalisme” (150). Just as the defeat in the Franco-Prussian War caused the left to reconsider their conception of the French nation, the same event spurred the nationalist sentiment that developed on the right: “National defeat accompanied by the loss of territory and prestige, both of which serve as constant reminders of national disgrace, creates, it seems, a fertile soil for the growth of a particularly robust type of nationalism” (Buthman 324). In this atmosphere, the ideology that took shape through the individuals and movements of the new right constituted a fresh chapter for rightist politics in France.

Peter Davies characterizes the new right’s ideology as based upon “a reawakened sense of national pride and (relatively speaking) an ultra-modern brand of populism” (58). Appeal to the masses was necessary to operate successfully within a democratic system and gain votes in elections, but for some groups of the right, such as the Action française, intellectual influence was more important. Those involved in the new right found significant faults with republican values in general and the Third Republic in particular. They were opposed, for example, to its parliamentary nature and preferred instead a strong executive government such as a dictator or king. There was a direct contrast between the outlooks of the republicans and the new right: “Whereas the
republican leadership of the 1880s spoke of the nation in terms of unity, laicité, and contract, the droite révolutionnaire came to embrace a nation defined in ethnic, racial, and cultural terms” (Ford 19). For some factions of the new right, this sort of conception of the French nation ultimately resulted in xenophobia and anti-Semitism, but it was also related to an ideology of regionalism.

This is not to say that anti-Semitism only existed on the right. The association of Jews with speculation was widespread in French society. In Winock’s analysis of anti-Semitism and the left, he finds that although good relations between the left and the Jews in France are highly memorable in France’s history during events such as the Revolution, the Dreyfus affair, and the Resistance, anti-Semitism also raged on the left. This is partly due to a fundamental contradiction between the left’s secular and universalist conception of French society and the Jewish community’s religious foundation and loyalty to its traditions. This “universalist ethnocentrism” was incompatible with the specificity of the Jewish community (151-56). However, while Winock highlights anti-Semitism on the left prior to the era of the Dreyfus Affair, other studies have shown that during World War II, anti-Semitism existed among members of the resistance and anti-racism existed among the collaborators.² My emphasis on anti-Semitism on the right is due to its overlap with regionalism in new right ideology and should not be construed as the attributing of anti-Semitism solely to the right in France.

Regionalism came to be associated with the right at this time in France’s history because of the views of intellectual and political figures such as Maurice Barrès and Charles Maurras. Barrès was a novelist and politician whose conceptions of nationalism
were influential for other right-wing thinkers, including Maurras. Like Barrès, Maurras had personal interests in the regional cause and was an intellectual figure, but he is perhaps best remembered for being the leader of the monarchist group *Action française* (AF). Their ideologies overlapped; for example, Barrès’ work on nationalism served as an inspiration for AF doctrine, but the principal divergence in their beliefs was that Barrès was not a monarchist. Both men had important roles in the formulation of early far right ideology, which marked a sort of turning point in the conceptualization of the French nation, and their espousal of regionalism resulted in its association with the radical right well into the twentieth century. However, this association would later color the reputation of regional groups in favor of autonomy, regardless of their political leanings.

1.3a Maurice Barrès

Barrès’ support for regional cultures stemmed from his origins as a native of the region of Lorraine. Alsace and Lorraine were lost to Germany as a result of France’s defeat in the Franco-Prussian War, and Barrès feared that the annexation would result in the deterioration of Lorraine’s regional cultural heritage (Tannenbaum 7). Accordingly, Barrès’ passion for his native region manifested itself in a particularly strong support of *revanchisme*, which at this time referred to the desire to gain back the two lost regions from Germany. This stance on the need to avenge the humiliating military defeat lent a patriotic aspect to Barrès’ persona. He spoke publicly about Alsace and Lorraine to help reinforce the link in the public’s consciousness between France and its lost regions. For
example, as he stated in 1899, “Il faut que nous continuions, malgré l’accident de 70-71, à considérer ces deux provinces comme des parties de l’organisme français” (Scènes et doctrines 275). In spite of a political separation, he considered Alsace and Lorraine to maintain a spiritual link to France.

Barrès also expressed his patriotic sentiments through his fiction. For example, the popular 1909 novel Colette Baudoche: histoire d’une jeune fille de Metz illustrates Barrès’ attachment to his native province. Barrès idealizes Lorraine and praises French culture through the story of a young woman whose mother and grandmother take in a German boarder in the city of Metz. The boarder is a teacher named Asmus, and throughout the story he is won over by the apparent superiority of French language and culture. He begins dining with the three women nightly, and he is impressed by “une certaine supériorité d’hygiène et de goût . . . l’effet modeste d’une vieille civilisation” (61). During a visit to the city of Nancy, Asmus is spiritually renewed and awed by the beauty and refinement he sees: “Q’il est heureux, réjoui. . . . Nancy l’allège, le libère” (143). The elegance of the French cafés is contrasted with the “brasseries fétides” where Germans drink their beers (145).

Barrès depicts the inhabitants of Lorraine as possessing an undying loyalty to France in the face of their German conquerors. This patriotic sentiment culminates when Colette rejects the gentleman Asmus’ proposal of marriage to remain loyal to her French roots: “une jeune fille a choisi la voie que lui assigne l’honneur à la française” (256). After enduring heart-wrenching conflict in making the decision, Colette sacrifices the possibility of marriage with an honorable man in order to preserve her devotion to
Lorraine, which would be compromised by marrying a German. In contrast to the story of *Le tour de la France par deux enfants* in which the young boys leave German Alsace in a patriotic act and return to French soil, here Barrès depicts patriotic duty through a character who remains in Lorraine despite the annexation by Germany and holds firm in her loyalty to her French nationality.

Barrès’ interest in regionalism did not stem only from his passion for Lorraine, but from philosophical questions such as how to reconcile the individual and society. Barrès found an answer to this question in a conception of federalism inspired largely by the writings of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. Barrès wrote that through a federalist, decentralized governmental system, it was possible to merge individual freedom with social cohesion and at the same time preserve the diversity of geographical regions. He advocated that the regions and their unique spirits and customs could best prosper in a federation, because through federation, unity may be achieved without excessive constraint (Barrès qtd. in McClelland 155-57).

For Barrès, nationalism and regionalism were interrelated concepts. In his “Notes sur les idées fédéralistes,” Barrès underscores the importance of the role that regional affiliation has in French nationality: “La nationalité française…est faite des nationalités provinciales. Si l’une de celles-ci fait défaut, le caractère français perd un de ses éléments” (Scènes et doctrines 444). He critiques Paris for giving France an abstract notion of the nation that is impossible to grasp and identifies the region as a concrete way to express patriotism:

Il faut à des hommes des raisons précises, tangibles, d’aimer leur pays. Que le mot “patrie” ne soit pas une expression métaphysique à l’usage des
Implicit in this passage is the valorization of a decentralized system in which individuals have roles in local government in addition to a critique of what Barrès viewed as an intangible patriotism such as that advocated through the Third Republic’s primary schools. For him, a concrete connection with one’s local region was a more powerful force than a vague notion of citizenry at the national level, and it was through local identity that national identity was forged.

This conception of regionalism and nationalism privileged la terre et les morts (the earth and the dead), which was also related to the idea of enracinement (rootedness). Through la terre et les morts, one is fundamentally linked to one’s nation by way of ancestry, cultural heritage, and ties to the land. This includes a literal tie to the land where one’s dead ancestors are buried, and those whose ancestors are not buried in French soil should not be considered true Français. Regional identity is also one of the bases for this link:

Cette vue sur le terroir nous mène à une organisation régionaliste. Le terroir nous parle et collabore à notre conscience nationale, aussi bien que les morts. C’est même lui qui donne à leur action sa pleine efficacité. Les ancêtres ne nous transmettent intégralement l’héritage accumulé de leurs âmes que par la permanence de l’action terrienne. (Scènes et doctrines 95)

La terre et les morts are the bases for both a concrete ancestral connection and innate spiritual link to one’s motherland; they create a rootedness that cements and justifies a feeling of belonging to a nation.
Equally important in Barrès’ vocabulary is the opposite notion of déracinement, or unrootedness, and in his 1897 novel Les déracinés, he critiques the Republic and the national ideals it disseminates at the expense of local heritage. The Republic is represented by the character of M. Bouteiller, a teacher at a lycée in Lorraine, who is described as lacking any understanding of the local culture: “il est un produit pédagogique, un fils de la raison, étranger à nos habitudes traditionnelles, locales ou de la famille, tout abstrait, et vraiment suspendu dans le vide” (24). He perpetuates the Republic’s education system, of which he is a product, and he cannot grasp the true identities of his students due to his déracinement. In addition, Barrès critiques the educational system of the Republic for uprooting students from their local cultures: “Déraciner ces enfants, les détacher du sol et du groupe social où tout les relie, pour les placer hors de leurs préjugés dans la raison abstraite, comment cela le gênerait-il, lui qui n’a pas de sol, ni de société, ni, pense-t-il, de préjugés?” (24). Here there is a direct opposition between the beliefs of Barrès and those that fueled the republicans’ desire to create a united citizenry. Whereas Barrès believed patriotism was born through ties to regional heritage and thus supported the preservation of regional cultural differences, the republicans believed that patriotism was best generated by creating shared cultural referents in order to incorporate citizens into a common public sphere.

In Barrès’ ideology, the unrooted are designated as outsiders, meaning the nationalism he advocates is a closed nationalism. For example, foreigners are considered outsiders, as they lack roots to French soil. When Barrès stood for election in Nancy in the late 1890’s, he declared as part of his platform: “la patrie est plus forte dans l’âme
d’un enraciné que dans celle d’un déraciné,” alluding to a mystical connection between “true French” and the motherland (Scènes et doctrines 401). He went on in the platform to elaborate plans to reform laws to limit naturalization and the right of foreigners to own land, and he advocated instead “l’union de la race et de la terre en assurant un coin de terre insaisissable à chaque famille.” This terminology clearly refers to the link he favors between “la race” and “la terre,” and this specific proposal illustrates the belief that the rooted should have privileges within French society. Barrès goes so far as to state that the foreigner is a parasite that poisons French society (Scènes et doctrines 386).

It is important to note that these outsiders against whom it was necessary to protect French society also included the Jews. Barrès considered the Jews an unrooted people who lacked a true homeland: “Les juifs n’ont pas de patrie au sens où nous l’entendons. Pour nous, la patrie, c’est le sol et les ancêtres, c’est la terre de nos morts. Pour eux, c’est l’endroit où ils trouvent leur plus grand intérêt” (Scènes et doctrines 72). Jews were associated with usury, which was not considered productive work that contributed to society. Barrès believed that Jews held a disproportionate number of powerful positions in French society to which they were not entitled. Instead he believed those positions should be held by “nos véritables nationaux, enfants de la Gaule et non de la Judée” (Scènes et doctrines 386). This anti-Semitism is a significant part of Barrès’ conceptualization of the French nation in racial and cultural terms; Jews did not have authentic ties to French soil and were thus considered outsiders.
1.3b Charles Maurras and the *Action Française*

The political ideologies with which regionalism was associated at this period were imbued with reactionary elements such as anti-Semitism and xenophobia that would eventually taint the reputations of those involved. These elements were not only present in Barrès’ ideology, but were found throughout the various factions of the new right, including the ideology of Charles Maurras. Maurras was a very prominent intellectual figure in France throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Like Barrès, he was a member of the French Academy, but he is best remembered as the leader of the *Action française* (AF), the political movement and newspaper by which he spread his nationalist and monarchist ideology, known as Integral Nationalism. Peter Davies characterizes the influence of the AF as follows: “In conventional terms—votes won, seats gained—it was innocuous in the extreme, but in its role as a high-powered ‘think-tank’—a kind of laboratory of ideas—and in the way it impacted upon the psyche of the nation, it was of profound importance” (87). Regionalism became associated with Maurras, as he favored decentralization and was a partisan of the Provencal language and culture, but his notoriety stems from what Brogan terms his “politics of hate” (116). Maurras’ anti-Semitism and xenophobia, in addition to his links with the Vichy regime, all contribute to the questionable reputation of a figure whose ideology had lasting effects on the radical right.

As a young adult, Maurras became interested in the literature, language, and culture of his native Provence. He was involved with the *Société des Félibriges de Paris*, a literary society associated with the Provencal poet Frédéric Mistral, who dedicated his
life to the renewal and preservation of the Occitan language. However, Maurras’ political ideas regarding regional autonomy were deemed to be too radical, and eventually he was expelled. Despite this severance, Maurras and Mistral retained a mutual admiration, and he began his own Félibrige circle. His partisanship for Provence and regional autonomy in general would remain present in his political ideology even after he became a decided monarchist.

Maurras was influenced by the ideology of Barrès; he valued his Provençal heritage and the rootedness to be found in regional identity. Additionally, Maurras believed in a federalist France in which the provinces would have local autonomy. He considered departmental classifications to be “absurde et anarchique” because they were artificial and stifled the traditional local cultures (Dictateur et roi 383). The departments were a result of the Revolution and thus a symbol of the centralizing tendencies of the Republic. However, Maurras’ idea of federalism differed from that of Barrès in that Maurras did not agree wholly with Proudhon’s work which privileged the role of the contract to unite the federated bodies. Maurras’ conception of federalism was what Buthman termed “natural federalism,” which privileged instead local autonomy based on natural historical or economic necessities (210-11). Maurras believed that the ancient provinces were natural bodies that should be restored to prevent against centralizing tendencies: “associations naturelles, comme la famille, la commune et la province, tous les rassemblements de citoyens sont tantôt frappés d’inertie par les lois de l’État . . .” (Dictateur et roi 382). He proposed that the provinces be governed by regional councils rather than an ineffective Republic.
As a monarchist, Maurras thought these natural bodies would best flourish under a king. Maurras’ ideology was termed Integral Nationalism because of the integral role the king held in Maurras’ conception of the nation. He thought hereditary monarchy was the only appropriate manifestation of centralized power, and the idea of birthright was essential: “La patrie est une société naturelle ou . . . historique. Son caractère décisif est la naissance. . . . On naît Français par le hasard de la naissance, comme on peut naître Montmorency ou Bourbon. C’est avant tout un phénomène d’hérédité” (Réalités 269-70). He viewed the monarchy as compatible with decentralization, stating that only a king could decentralize France yet keep it united to one allegiance. As Tannnenbaum notes, this was not necessarily true in French history, as proven by Louis XIV for example, but it was nonetheless one of Maurras’ most used arguments for a restoration (75).

The return to a monarchy would also ensure the preservation of France against the influence of what Maurras called the four “états confédérés;” Jews, Protestants, Freemasons and resident aliens, or métèques. The protection of France against outsiders was an important part of Maurrasian nationalism: “Le nationalisme est la sauvegarde due à tous ces trésors qui peuvent être menacés sans qu’une armée étrangère ait passé la frontière, sans que le territoire soit physiquement envahi. Il défend la nation contre l’Etranger de l’intérieur” (Mes idées politiques 264). These four groups represented for Maurras the “étranger de l’intérieur,” and it was of utmost importance to protect France from cosmopolitanism. Thus his conception of nationalism was strongly linked with anti-Semitism and xenophobia, one of the recurring themes of new right doctrine.
The Roman Catholic church also played a role in Maurras’ political visions. Although Maurras declared himself to be agnostic, he publicly supported the church as an institution that embodied order and hierarchy: “C’est à la notion la plus générale de l’ordre que cette essence religieuse correspond pour ses admirateurs du dehors” (La démocratie religieuse 18). He was one of these admirateurs du dehors; although he lacked Christian convictions, the authority and discipline of the church were compatible with his penchant for the monarchy. Following the separation of church and state in 1905, his political program called for the reinstitution of Catholicism as the official religion of France (Dictateur et roi 393-94). This is not surprising, given that the church was historically a strong ally of the monarchy. Maurras’ admiration for the church also stemmed from his affinity for Greco-Roman civilization, since he viewed the church as a descendant of the Roman Empire. He privileged Mediterranean influences in his conception of French culture and heritage: “Je suis Romain par tout le positif de mon être. . . . Par ce trésor dont elle a reçu d’Athènes et transmis le dépôt à notre Paris, Rome signifie sans conteste la civilisation et l’humanité” (La démocratie religieuse 26). For Maurras, Mediterranean and Catholic influences on French civilization were the antithesis to undesirable German and Protestant forces.

Although Maurras was not an original founder of the AF in 1899, he became involved in 1901, created its doctrine, and made it into a monarchist group. Buthman notes that “one may even go so far as to say that the Action Française was virtually Charles Maurras himself” (294). The daily newspaper of the same name was launched in 1908, and it was the mouthpiece of the group. The content reflected the anti-republican
ideology of Integral Nationalism and included countless articles written by Maurras himself. AF propaganda included anti-Semitic themes, which Joly identifies as central to the publication: “À partir de 1911, l’antisémitisme est incontestablement la stratégie principale du quotidien dans sa quête d’extension populaire” (335). Tannenbaum points out that the sensationalism often found in the publication was likely due to two factors: the need to attract support for the movement and the need for the newspaper to keep up its circulation (93). The interwar period was when the newspaper reached one of its widest distributions at over 30,000 (P. Davies 81).

In terms of the development of the extreme right during the twentieth century, the AF was both an important chapter and one with longevity; Maurras’ ideology continued to have widespread influence up through World War II. The affiliation of AF doctrine with the Vichy regime would eventually cement Maurras’ questionable reputation in the public’s eyes. Maurras was not himself an integral part of the regime, but his ideology, along with that of Barrès, did inform Vichy values and institutions. Like Maurras, the Vichy regime under Marshal Pétain was anti-republican, sought to rid France of foreign influences, and valued the ancient provinces as guardians of France’s heritage. The weakness and decadence of the Third Republic was blamed for the military defeat by Germany, and the principles and institutions of democracy were held responsible. The countryside and regional folklore were equated with France’s true heritage, and the industrialized cities were equated with outsiders such as foreigners, Jews, and communists. These groups were rejected in an effort to rediscover some form of “Frenchness” that was perceived to be slipping away. Similarities between Maurras’
ideology and the values of Vichy are not difficult to see, and Maurras was condemned following the war for his support of the regime.

The ideologies of Barrès and Maurras provide an understanding of the interesting context in which regionalism progressed into the political scene in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While both men advocated decentralization and held regional affiliation in great esteem, they also advocated anti-Semitism and xenophobia. The new right’s conception of the French nation and the role of the regions therein was fundamentally different from that of the republicans. Regional identity was viewed as an essential part of French identity and was a force that joined one to the motherland. Regional identity also implied an ancestral link to the French soil that outsiders such as foreigners lacked. Whereas the republicans may have viewed regional differences as obstacles to creating a unified French citizenry, the new right viewed regional identity as a vehicle for authentic French nationality.

1.3c Brittany and the New Right

The association of regionalism with the ideology of the new right sets a broader context for an understanding of the political situation in Brittany during the Third Republic and the form that early Breton regionalist groups took. The political culture of Brittany during the Third Republic was dominated by the conservative right, mainly in the form of Legitimist royalists. The clergy had an important role in the continued success of the royalists, as it exerted influence on the local aristocracy for their support, and in turn, the royalists strongly defended Catholicism (Bensoussan 312). Because of
the important role the church held in Brittany and the influence it exerted, republicanism was not immediately accepted in the region. Although larger towns in Brittany eventually converted to the republican cause by the turn of the century, there was no strong popular republican movement among the rural people (Gemie 178).

The Catholic church has historically had a very influential role in the region, and the opposition between the church and the Republic became further marked following the republicans’ educational reform when the church sought to defend its role in a domain it had traditionally dominated. Priests were defenders of local culture and language because they saw it as a way of preserving the Catholic faith. However, republican officials believed that by speaking Breton, the priests were keeping peasants under their influence and thus preventing them from participating in the life of the Republic. Additionally, local Breton cultural practices and religious rituals were viewed by republicans as merely serving the priests and local aristocracy, which further contributed to a lack of understanding between republicans and peasants (Gemie 181).

Because of Brittany’s penchant for monarchism and the AF’s support of the Catholic church, it would seem that Brittany was a fertile ground for the AF. In Bensoussan’s analysis of the AF’s popularity in Brittany, he highlights reasons for an attraction to “la pensée maurusienne” among local royalists: the hierarchical nature of its ideology, which appealed to the rural aristocracy, and the appeal of a strong new philosophy to renew the monarchist movement (313). The royalist presence in the rural aristocracy and its attraction to the AF led to strong connections between the AF and
local Catholic notables, and this would ultimately lead to the downfall of the AF in Brittany as a popular movement.

The beginning of AF popularity in Brittany began after 1908, with the transformation of the AF newspaper into a daily publication that allowed for a wider distribution of propaganda than the previous biweekly format. However, before World War I, despite the fact that local AF groups existed in a wide geographic range of cities in the region, membership remained quite small. Membership numbers reached their height in the mid-1920’s, perhaps due to a reaction against the coming to power of the left in 1924, but even then estimations are 1,500-2,000 members (Bensoussan 317). Following the condemnation of the AF by Pope Pius XI in 1926, the ties between the church and the monarchists were fundamentally weakened; the local aristocracy was forced to choose between loyalty to Catholicism and their political preferences. The AF could not recover from this blow in Brittany due to the fundamental role of the church in Breton society.

Thus, the AF did not enjoy a long-term presence in Brittany as a popular movement, but there was evidence of the spread of Maurras’ ideology. This ideology would influence the most notorious manifestation of the Breton regionalist movement in the first half of the twentieth century. As regionalism was politicized by the new right beginning at the turn of the century, local political manifestations of regionalist sentiment also began to take place. The early movement in Brittany was composed of groups whose goals ranged from a modest degree of autonomy to outright Breton nationalism, some of which eventually created a very negative image for the movement of the second
half of the twentieth century due to affiliation with the Nazi regime during the Occupation.

1.3d Early Breton Political Regionalism

Prior to World War I the movement was conservative in nature, calling for modest decentralization reforms and supporting local Breton culture. For example, the Union Régionaliste Bretonne (URB), which was founded in 1898, was the first regionalist political party of Brittany. Membership consisted of nobles, priests, and professionals. One reason that the URB never had any widespread success was that its affiliation with the aristocracy impeded any substantial support from the republicans of the region (Gemie 192). The outbreak of war brought an end to the URB and early regionalist action. Reece views World War I as significant for the Breton movement because “it swept away the remaining debris of regionalism and left the field clear in Brittany for the militant action of a new generation of young and determined Breton nationalists” (67).

Indeed, Breton nationalists came to dominate the movement of the interwar period. The autonomist newspaper Breizh Atao (Bretagne toujours/Brittany forever) was started in 1919 by students with right-wing affiliations. Breizh Atao adopted a radical tone that often accused France of taking advantage of Brittany and degrading its people. In 1925 Roparz Hémon founded Gwalarn (Nord-Ouest/Northwest), which was a Breton-language cultural and literary review linked with Breizh Atao. Hémon’s goal was to bring the Breton language to all literary and intellectual uses. The Skol Gwalarn (Gwalarn School) formed, which was comprised of the best Breton writers of this period.
Breizh Atao was affiliated first with the Parti Autonomiste Breton and later became the mouthpiece for the Parti Nationaliste Breton (PNB). The PNB openly declared separation from France as part of their platform. Throughout the 1930’s, Breizh Atao developed a racist and elitist tone, and Gemie notes that like many peripheral political groups in France at this time, Breizh Atao “was loosely inspired by the model of fascism” (203). The PNB’s critiques of the French state on the eve of World War II were very similar to those of the AF: accusations of corruption, critique of the Republic, and admiration for authoritarian forms of government. As noted by Reece, however, members of the PNB realized that one could not be a Breton nationalist and also support Maurras’ ideal of a decentralized France of regions united under a monarchy (132). Despite this divide, the ideological overlap illustrates that regionalism’s affiliation with the far right occurred at the local level as well as the national.

As Germany’s victory mounted, the leaders of the PNB, Olier Mordrel and François Debeauvais, viewed France’s defeat as imminent and seized upon the idea of a future Breton state within a nation-based Europe created by Germany. They began to openly praise Hitler’s victories, and to no surprise, in 1939 the French state officially outlawed Breize Atao, and the PNB was dissolved. Mordrel and Debeauvais made the decision to flee to Berlin, where they eventually received approval from Germany to recruit prisoners of war for the Breton nationalist cause. These men would be permitted to return to Brittany with Mordrel and Debeauvais. However, fewer than 150 men were persuaded to join their ranks, and Reece states that it was possible that many of these men simply wanted to return home, whatever the cost (153).
The day they arrived in Brittany with their conscripts was the same day France and Germany signed the armistice, which was not what the nationalist leaders were expecting. Hopes were lost for an independent Breton state, and Mordrel and Debeauvais were ordered by the Occupation authorities to cease all activities. Raymond Delaporte took over leadership of the PNB, affirming that the party would no longer be hostile to the French state. This new PNB adopted an attentiste policy and was tolerated by the Vichy regime, but membership stagnated. Gemie explains that although PNB membership seemed to offer certain privileges, such as exemption from serving in labor camps in Germany, there were likely only several hundred active members during the Occupation (223).

There was a military component to the Breton nationalist movement. Bagadoù Stourm (Troupes de combat/Combat Troops), for example, led by Yann Goulet, was a paramilitary component of the PNB. Goulet’s goal was to lead a Breton military force whose only loyalties were to an independent Breton state. As Leach states, “Numbering some 400 members, [Bagadoù Stourm] performed a function somewhere between nationalist scout troop and political ‘street muscle’ for the PNB” (19). Scholars such as Frélaut warn that Bagadoù Stourm should not be confused with the Lu Brezhon (Armée Bretonne/Breton Army) led by Célestin Laîné, whose members had been expelled from the PNB in 1943 (61). Laîné renamed his group Bezenn Perrot in 1943 after the recently-murdered Breton nationalist, Abbé Jean-Marie Perrot.

Bezenn Perrot, which numbered around 100 members, began to operate alongside the Waffen-SS in 1943, and eventually they adopted the SS uniforms in 1944. The force
participated in activities such as guarding prisoners and armed repression of Resistance activities (Gemie 224). When Allied troops advanced in France, members of Bezenn Perrot fled Brittany alongside the retreating German forces. Leach’s opinion is that Bezenn Perrot’s flight from Brittany “sealed its image as a collaborationist force serving purely German interests” (22). While this is probably true, members of Bezenn Perrot were not the only individuals associated with the Breton nationalist movement to be deemed collaborators following the war. The épuration targeted all those affiliated with the PNB, and this is not surprising due to Mordrel and Debeauvais’ public rejection of the French state and support for a Breton nation by way of German rule.

The Breton nationalists of this period saw German rule as an opportunity for the realization of a long-awaited dream: a Brittany independent from the French state. Ultimately this venture proved to be fruitless, as some groups of nationalists became more involved in supporting German rule rather than Breton independence. Some members of Bezenn Perrot probably did espouse Nazi ideals, while others were simply convinced that they were fighting for Breton independence. It was these more extreme factions of the Breton nationalist movement that brought postwar anger upon the whole community, ranging from moderate autonomists to radical nationalists. The Breton literary figure Pierre-Jakez Hélias stated that following the war “it was hardly possible to defend the ancestral language or even their descendants’ civilization without being seen as a Nazi infiltrator” (qtd. in Gemie 230-31). Due to the backlash following the war, Breton regionalism remained largely apolitical until the 1960’s, with the preceding decades dominated by cultural growth. Not surprisingly, when the Breton movement
became affiliated with politics once again, it was with the left, leaving behind all traces of fascism.

The Third Republic was a time of great political, social, and cultural change for France. Recovery after military defeat and the formation of a French nation were concerns for both ends of the political spectrum. For the republicans, this meant a citizenry instilled with patriotism and civic duty, values that were taught by state-run schools in the language of the motherland. The Third Republic is often cast by contemporary regional activists in a negative light for the effects republican reform had on regional languages and cultures. After all, a multilingual France was not conducive to a unified French citizenry. It can be argued that the Republic’s *mission civilisatrice* applied to territories within France’s boundaries in addition to territories outside of them and that Ferry’s education reform had a key role in the demise of regional languages and the devaluing of local culture in favor of a contrived national culture. My later discussion of the evolution of contemporary regional activism in Brittany will benefit from an understanding of this framework. Wright and Clark address the ongoing role of the regionalist question in debates regarding republican reform throughout the Third Republic:

[This link] . . . demonstrates an underlying force, the powerful fertility of the cultural movements which questioned the validity of a centralized cultural model in which French dominated regional cultures, both linguistic and social, and in which provincial intellectual life was ever in thrall to a capital which held the keys to academic, artistic, and journalistic success. (282)
The interaction of the center and the periphery has been a key issue for the various interpretations of French identity.

The new right laid a unique foundation for the affiliation of regionalist thought with the political arena. The value of regional languages and cultures was advocated by individuals who conceived of French identity in ethnic and cultural terms. While this viewpoint privileged regional identity as an authentic and ancestral tie to French soil, it also excluded those who lacked this type of tie and were thus considered outsiders. The foundational presence of anti-Semitism and xenophobia in the ideology of the new right gave regionalism a negative connotation. Additionally, Maurras’ condemnation following World War II as a collaborator only added to this negative perception. This was felt even more acutely in Brittany, as the choices of a small group of Breton nationalists tarnished the reputation of the entire Breton regionalist movement. These early manifestations of Breton political regionalism had a very different place on the political spectrum than the contemporary regionalist activists in Brittany who are largely associated with the left.

The new right was also an important precursor for the contemporary extreme right, in both the French and European contexts. For example, certain aspects of Maurras’ ideology are clearly echoed in that of the National Front. Additionally, some extreme right groups consider regional identity to be so fundamental that they reject the state in favor of a Europe comprised of regions. The new right’s legacy is significant in understanding subsequent nationalist movements.
All in all, the Third Republic offers a foundation for an understanding of how the national culture and language interacted with regional cultures and languages, in addition to how different political groups conceived of the French nation at this critical time. The development of regional consciousness, contemporary local regional activism, and current nationalist extreme right groups all have roots in this complex time in France’s history.

1 See Rémond 151, Sternhell 27, Ford 19, and P. Davies 55, for example.

2 See Epstein, for example.

3 “Fédération . . . c’est à dire pacte, contrat, traîté, convention, alliance, etc., est une convention par laquelle un ou plusieurs chefs de famille, une ou plusieurs communes, un ou plusieurs groupes de communes ou Etats, s’obligent réciproquement et également les uns envers les autres pour un ou plusieurs objets particuliers, dont la charge incombe spécialement alors et exclusivement aux délégués de la fédération” (Proudhon 67).

4 For details regarding election trends in Brittany during the Third Republic, see Pascal 19-23.
Chapter 2: Regional Consciousness in Brittany

In order to understand the Breton regionalist movement, it is first necessary to understand what is meant by the term *regionalist movement* as it applies to France. A regional movement is constituted by individuals who fight for recognition of the unique qualities of a particular region of France whose traditional or historical identity has been altered or perceived to have been altered by its inclusion into the French state. Pierre Bourdieu writes that “la revendication régionaliste” exists as a response to the region being labeled as a stigmatized space, defined by its economic and social distance from the capital: “c’est parce qu’elle existe comme unité négativement définie par la domination symbolique et économique que certains de ceux qui en participent peuvent être conduits à lutter . . . pour en changer la définition, pour inverser le sens et la valeur des traits stigmatisés . . .” (“L’identité et la représentation” 70). Thus taking part in a regional movement in France, or what I term regional activism, may be interpreted as a reaction to perceived symbolic and economic domination of the region by the capital.

Notable regional movements in France include the Bretons, Occitans\(^1\), Corsicans, and Basques. France’s regional movements vary greatly; for example, the Breton movement is largely rooted in cultural revival; the Occitanists contain a significant academic camp; the French Basque Country has important ties across the border with Spain; and the Corsican regionalists range from separatists committing serious acts of
violence to simple autonomists advocating increased self-governance for the region while remaining a part of France. These regional movements have a unique place in the cultural and political life of France. More radical activists claim that the regions were victims of internal colonialism that started under the policies of the Third Republic. Other “regionalists” are simply patrons of regional cultures. Others are solely language activists who are fighting for the legitimization and recognition of regional languages by the French state. Thus, various facets of any given regionalist movement may include cultural renaissance, linguistic renaissance, autonomist sentiment, nationalist sentiment, political activism, and education reform.

The Breton movement is known by its participants as the emsav. The word has its origins in the Breton verb meaning se lever, and other possible translations into French include soulèvement or révolte. William Calin translates the term into English as “Movement/Awakening” (9). But what is the emsav? There is no one singular group or organization that encompasses the Breton movement, but rather the emsav is comprised of various networks of cultural, political, and linguistic activists and their activities that have evolved over the course of the twentieth and now twenty-first centuries. Thus, the Breton movement may represent many different things to many different people. An understanding of the contemporary Breton political and cultural situations takes one through varied writings by general historians, political and language activists, sociolinguists, and native Breton activists who have published militant writings.

A regional movement such as the emsav assumes the existence of a regional consciousness, or sense of belonging to “Brittany” in addition to or sometimes instead of
a larger or smaller political, social, or geographic designation. It may be tempting to attribute regional consciousness to purely political instances, such as the division of France into départements at the time of the Revolution; however, it was likely that a sense of loss of “Brittany” to the Republic was felt at that time primarily by notables involved in governmental roles rather than the greater population of the region. Most Bretons did not have a sense of belonging to Brittany as a region; they instead affiliated themselves with smaller areas of origin, such as their particular village or local area, known as a pays. It is unrealistic to imagine that immediately following the Revolution, Breton peasants experienced any immediate significant change in the formation of this local identity. Rather, the formation of regional consciousness was a more gradual process resulting from social and cultural as well as political evolutions.

In Christophe Charle’s analysis of the matter, he attributes the development of regional consciousness to the effects of three principal factors: migratory movements, regional stereotypes, and regional symbolic activities (41). Migratory movements opened up new understandings of the relation between particular regions of France and the capital, while regional stereotypes and regional symbolic activities helped create a collective identity among the inhabitants of a region, although in very different ways. I would like to use these three factors that Charle has pinpointed as a basis for structuring my own analysis of regional consciousness, more specifically in terms of the formation of Breton consciousness and the related development of the Breton movement during the twentieth century. My own analysis will take these three factors into consideration, with particular focus on two case studies. The first will be the bande dessinée character
Bécassine as a paradigm of stereotypes of the Breton people, and my second will be the Breton musician Alan Stivell as a symbol of the Breton cultural renaissance of the latter half of the twentieth century. I will examine factors behind the formation of Breton consciousness with the goal of illustrating how the emsav evolved and its underlying ideology, which in turn helps answer the questions of why regionalism is so important to certain groups and what place it occupies in French society.

2.1 Migratory Movements

In his discussion of migratory movements, Charle highlights the rural depopulation that began in the nineteenth century. This type of movement could be either inter- or intra-regional, in the sense that at times individuals left a particular outlying region of France for the capital, while at other times individuals left their respective farms or villages for the larger cities within their own region. Paris drew migrants from all regions of France, but especially those that were overpopulated or economically underdeveloped. During the first half of the nineteenth century, many regions underwent technological modernizations that changed the local agricultural systems, thus reducing the demand for workers at harvest time, which was an added hardship to those who already faced seasonal winter unemployment (Duby and Wallon 82-84). It thus became necessary to move to larger cities to find gainful employment. Eugen Weber notes that while many migrants were forced to go to larger cities because of the need for survival, there were also advantages, such as the higher pay of urban employment for fewer hours of labor and easier access to medical care and charity help if
needed. Additionally, towns offered opportunities for amusement in the forms of shops and shows (285-86).

Between 1851 and 1911, the percentage of France’s population living in towns with over 2,000 inhabitants increased from 25.5% to 42.2%, signaling a decrease in the percentage of the population residing in rural areas (Duby and Wallon 472). This population shift is reflective of the trend that occurred during the nineteenth century whereby a more permanent emigration to towns eventually replaced the traditional seasonal migrations many peasants had practiced for generations. Weber underscores the importance of this shift on cultural change within villages, arguing that seasonal migrations served to reinforce the solidarity and existing culture of a village by delaying its economic deterioration with supplementary resources in times of need and thus preserving its isolation. Also, seasonal migrants often traveled in groups from the same village on local routes and had little interest in cultural practices differing from their own (280-82). However, as temporary migration shifted to more permanent emigration, those who moved to towns “sent back letters, tracts, and newspapers; they suggested new practices and tastes; they sent home parcels containing all sorts of curious sweets, spices, and fabrics; they came home for holidays and they retired there, bringing with them the notions and the fashions of the town” (288). Thus this sort of contact was more likely to erode the cultural isolation of a village, creating not only the awareness of differing ways of life, but that France was a larger entity that existed outside of the farm or village where one was born.
Charle ties the formation of a regional consciousness to another effect of the rural depopulation: a nostalgia in those left behind for a time, whether real or imagined, when the region was independent from the rest of France and had the capability to sustain its own inhabitants (41). A possible result was the sentiment that the region was “better off” without France, when parents did not have to give up their children to Paris. This sentiment also applied to the larger cities within the region, which were more industrialized than the countryside and more modernized in the sense of language and dress because of their contact with the capital. While some families were probably proud to have children move to the city and lead what seemed to be a more sophisticated lifestyle, others regretted the loss of their loved ones to a seemingly foreign city. This nostalgia cited by Charle is often found in the discourses of contemporary regional activists who perpetuate a negative conception of the center-periphery relationship. Some characterize the rural depopulation as a part of France’s internal colonialism whereby inhabitants of the periphery moved to the center to contribute to France’s industrial development at the expense of the regional communities.

In addition to the rural depopulation of the nineteenth century, Charle also cites the later influx of tourists back into certain regions during the twentieth century as a migratory movement that exacerbated feelings against the center and seemed to further support the premise of internal colonialism. The lament of the arrival of tourists in Brittany for example would become incorporated into the discourse of the emsav during the cultural renaissance in the 1960’s and 1970’s; that “outsiders” purchased land and
houses once owned by native Bretons was interpreted a sign of France’s abuse of the region.

I believe it is also useful to include conscription-based movements in this discussion, since conscription was often the catalyst for the movement of men outside of their region. Conscription was started in 1798 and regularized by Napoleon Bonaparte; throughout the nineteenth century the term of duty ranged from three to eight years, being set at three years just prior to World War I. Conscription was especially difficult for peasants who relied on manpower to sustain farms; a son called away to serve in the military could result in the loss of a family’s livelihood. This hardship contributed to the view of military service “not as a duty owed to some larger community or nation, but as a heavy tribute exacted by an oppressive and alien state” (Weber 295). Some contemporary regional activists also take this view, including conscription on the list of abuses suffered by its regions since the Revolution. However, once service was begun, many men realized the advantages of having basic needs met by this “alien state,” such as eating meat, which was often a luxury at home. Soldiers were also exposed to the French language and returned home with realizations of the opportunities that speaking French could bring, such as urban employment.

Military service was often the first time soldiers left their town or village, and it was their experiences in the army that introduced them to the larger French nation. This introduction often included outsiders’ views of their homelands, leading to new conceptualizations of their own regions. The migration of Breton soldiers out and then back into Brittany during World War I is discussed by Michel de Certeau in his analysis.
of minority movements. He writes that “Breton consciousness” is largely a culturally derived concoction (71). De Certeau considers, for example, what Edgar Morin noted in his study of the Breton village of Plodémet concerning World War I’s effects on personal identity. Bretons traditionally derived their sense of identity from affiliation with their village or pays of origin. Plodémet is situated in the pays of Bigouden, for example. However, soldiers from Plodémet that served in the war experienced a new sort of classification. Morin writes: “Four years of hardship and ‘Hey you, Breton!’ from sergeants made the Bigouden conscious of his membership in the great Breton family, which became a new fraternity” (34). De Certeau points out that this cultural construction was only formed when Bretons were faced with non-Bretons, and thus the self-consciousness of feeling different is rooted in the designation of the difference by outsiders (71). Thus a regional consciousness came to exist in Brittany, but this consciousness was likely more localized until the inhabitants came into contact with the regional designation by which outsiders had labeled that particular area of the Hexagon for centuries.

Overall, migratory movements allowed for contact between the inhabitants of a particular region and the rest of France, which in turn influenced how these inhabitants viewed themselves and the relation between their locality and greater France. Additionally, movements resulting from military service, the emigration from the countryside to towns and cities during the nineteenth century, and the influx of tourists back to the periphery during the twentieth century fuel a more contemporary regional consciousness as factors contributing to regional activists’ sometimes negative
conceptions of the relationship of France to its regions. Migratory movements had many other effects, such as facilitating the spread of the French language. For example, when soldiers returned from World War I, they had witnessed the opportunities that the French language could provide an individual by allowing him to earn a greater wage by seeking urban employment. However, contact with outsiders also meant exposure to ridicule from those who viewed a peasant that did not speak French as nothing more than a backwards *plouc*. This sort of ridicule, common not only in the capital but in urban centers throughout France, was both a cause and an effect of the proliferation of regional stereotypes.

2.2 Regional Stereotypes

The proliferation of regional stereotypes was at the root of discrimination against the peasantry of many regions of France. Even Bourdieu can provide a first-hand account of this sort of symbolic domination in his *Esquisse pour une auto-analyse*. He discusses his experiences as a boy from a small village transplanted to an urban *lycée*. Bourdieu grew up in a small village in the region of Béarn, located at the foot of the Pyrenees, but as the son of a postman he did not technically fall into the category of the peasantry. Nevertheless, his rural origins made it difficult to get along with the urban students. For example, he states that although his village was only twenty kilometers from Pau, “il était inconnu de mes camarades de lycée, qui en plaisantaient‖ (109). Bourdieu tells of another student, his academic rival: “[il] me blessait souvent en prononçant mon nom à la manière des paysans du pays et en plaisantant sur le nom,
symbole de toute l’arrière-pays paysanne, de mon village” (125-26). This type of ill-treatment was a reflection of the negative perceptions the urban students had of those from the smaller villages of the region.

In his autobiography *The Horse of Pride*, Breton literary figure Pierre-Jakez Hélias also attests to difficulties endured due to regional stereotypes. Because of his academic achievements, he earned a scholarship to a lycée in the city of Quimper, where he would attend boarding school for seven years, essentially leaving his small village in Finistère behind. He explains the difficulties he and his compatriots encountered as peasants in what seemed to be foreign land:

. . . no one seemed to remember that we had been transplanted, that we were immigrants living in a civilization foreign to our own. Not only were we still translating our oral language into bookish French, but our whole way of life, our behavior all through the day, from waking to sleeping, tended to irritate others or to make them think we were a bunch of lunks, whereas watching those city kids put on airs left us dumbfounded. I learned once and for all that the seediest bourgeois considered himself far above the most subtle peasant.” (305)

Thus his transition from rural to city life was a difficult one that was only made worse by mockery at the hands of the other students. Born in 1914, Hélias spoke Breton as his first language and learned French in the school system, making him a member of the transitory generations of peasants who were caught between the customs of their traditional villages and the “Frenchified” life of the city. As evidenced above, not all city-dwellers looked upon their new neighbors with favor.

Morvan Lebesque was admittedly one of these individuals, although he later became a Breton activist. He wrote in his famous 1968 memoir *Comment peut-on être*
that although he was born and raised in Nantes, he did not place himself in what was for him at the time the strange and undesirable category of being a Breton:

Les Bretons, je les connaissais. C’était des êtres crasseux, superstitieux, comiques, bref étrangers, logés à l’extrémité de la ville . . . un quartier où on allait peu, juste après celui des putains. Il surplombait le port du haut d’une falaise de granit à laquelle on voyait toujours accrochés des gosses dépenaillés, culs-nus; et, disait mon père, quand l’un d’eux tombe ou se fait écraser, ça ne compte pas, ces gens-là font des tas d’enfants. (22-23)

The portrait Lebesque paints of the Bretons living in Nantes is especially interesting because Lebesque was from such a poor background that even his high school Latin teacher advised him to drop out of school due to his inferior social status. This is reflective of Hélias’ comment above that no matter the relative wealth, a bourgeois would always consider himself above a peasant. Breton peasants were thought of by many both inside and outside of Brittany as backwards, dirty, drunk, stupid, excessively devoted to the church, uneducated, rebellious, superstitious, or simply foreign; but how and why did such stereotypes come into existence?

Brittany was considered an especially “foreign” part of France because, although it was annexed as a part of France in 1532, it retained special privileges until the Revolution. For example, Brittany’s own governing bodies approved all taxes levied; Brittany’s court system remained intact; and Bretons were not required to serve France in any military capacity. Thus the region operated quite independently from the capital until the Revolution when all special privileges were abolished. It was shortly thereafter that Brittany played a role in the Chouannerie, a royalist uprising of a rural nature that continued on and off in Brittany and Normandy until the turn of the nineteenth century. Thus, to outsiders, Brittany seemed slow to accept its rank as a part of the new Republic.
The Chouannerie is one aspect that Catherine Bertho cites when pinpointing particular traits and events of Brittany that have been main influences on outsiders’ interpretations of the region. In addition to Brittany’s role in the Chouannerie, she believes the Celtic origins of its people and its delay in economic development were characteristics that influenced assessments and perhaps fed early distortions of the region. The Chouannerie instilled in France’s collective memory the image of a rural region rejecting the Republic’s modern ideals, while Celtic ancestors gave others the impression that Bretons were “fossiles anthropologiques arrivés intact du fond des âges” (45). The delays in industrialization in Brittany versus the rest of France reinforced the impression of Brittany as an archaic land. For Bertho, these factors are reasons why France seems to exaggerate for Brittany the labels it assigns to all its provinces: “Lorsque la province française dans son ensemble est réputée sauvage, la Bretagne paraît simplement plus sauvage ( . . . parce que celte, archaïque, et chouanne); lorsque la province française tout entière est censée être catholique et conservatrice, la Bretagne est plus catholique et plus conservatrice (toujours parce que celte, archaïque et chouanne . . . )” (45). According to this philosophy, Brittany falls into the center/periphery dichotomy endured by all the provinces in relation to Paris, but because of its history seems to suffer stereotypes more extreme than the others.

Representations of Brittany can be found in literary works throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Authors of novels of the early nineteenth century were influenced by the work of the first ethnologists that ventured into Brittany for research and observation, and the resulting portrayal was often a savage Brittany, such as
that seen in Balzac’s 1829 novel *Les Chouans*. The latter half of the nineteenth century was a time of growing interest in Brittany as a folkloric and rural world, with representations beginning to focus on the image of the peasant. The travel writings of Hippolyte Taine, a historian and critic who traveled through France in the 1860’s, provide an example of the negativity with which Brittany was portrayed in his *Carnets de voyage: notes sur la province, 1863-1865*. In describing the Breton peasants, for instance, he states: “Les mœurs ici sont restées bien primitives. Des familles bretonnes vont à la ville une fois par semaine, entrent dans un cabaret, boivent tout le jour; tous sont ivres morts” (58). This sort of stereotypical representation of Bretons by outsiders contributed to a distorted view of the region. As the century turned, representations of Brittany spilled over from literature to other genres, and I will consider one particular representation of Brittany in the *bande dessinée* to explore how this popular form of written entertainment contributed to the evolution and proliferation of stereotypes associated with Brittany and the Breton people.

2.2a Bécassine

One fascinating representation of Brittany during the twentieth century is the popular *bande dessinée* (BD) starring the character Bécassine. Bécassine is a Breton maid, which was a well-known figure in 1905 when she was first created, as it was not uncommon for Breton girls and young women at this time to move from the countryside to larger towns to work in domestic roles. This trend was part of the larger migrant patterns that developed during the nineteenth century as workers moved from the
province to the capital and other large towns throughout France. Although women from many regions moved from the countryside to the city in search of employment as laundry workers, wet nurses, seamstresses, or maids, Brittany was particularly affected by this exodus because having a “servante bretonne” was popular in the bourgeois community (Alguhon, Désert, and Specklin 401).

The bonne bretonne was an archetype of the feminine domestic worker during this time, and it is possible that Bécassine became the most popular bonne bretonne France has ever seen. Bécassine first appeared in 1905 on the pages of La Semaine de Suzette, a weekly magazine for young girls of bourgeois catholic upbringing. Although the BD was first written by Jacqueline Rivièr e and drawn by Joseph Pinchon to fill a blank page, Bécassine was successful and thus began to make regular appearances in the magazine. In 1913, Bécassine became incorporated into more elaborate stories when the first Bécassine album was published, drawn by Pinchon and authored by Maurice Languereau, whose pen name was Caumery. There were a total of 27 albums published between 1913 and 1950, all but two drawn by Pinchon and the majority written by Caumery until his death in 1941. Other authors continued the series, some writing under the same pen name. The BD’s popularity also led to the release of Pierre Caron’s film Bécassine in 1940, starring Max Dearly and Paulette Dubost.

The span of Bécassine’s popularity and her appeal to generations of audiences made her an especially visible symbol of the Breton people that was marketed throughout France. While some consider Bécassine to be a landmark BD heroine and treasured figure of children’s literature, others see her as an embodiment of the negative
stereotypes attributed to Breton peasants that only served to perpetuate regional
discriminations. My goal will be to examine representations of Bécassine to determine
why she caused these reactions among various groups, such as those who believe her
image only reinforced the view of provincial populations as simple-minded and
backwards.

Bécassine is a maid from Finistère who lives with and works for the affluent
Madame de Grand-Air. The premise of many of the early stories in *La Semaine de
Suzette* is Bécassine’s follies in carrying out her domestic tasks, mostly stemming from
her misinterpretation of her mistress’s orders. In the series of albums, the narratives
become longer and more detailed, telling of Bécassine’s many adventures and
misadventures living and traveling around France and even abroad, sometimes in the
service of the Marquise and other times off on a particular escapade. The albums’ titles
offer a glimpse into the range of Bécassine’s exploits: *Bécassine chez les Alliés*,
*Bécassine en apprentissage*, *Bécassine alpiniste*, *Bécassine au pays basque*, *Bécassine
fait du scoutisme*, *Bécassine aux bains de mer*, and many more. The humor of the stories
stem from Bécassine’s good-natured but childlike naiveté.

In *L’Enfance de Bécassine*, the first of the albums, which was released in 1913,
readers learn of Bécassine’s background. Bécassine, whose birth name is Annaïk
Labornez, is born in a town near Quimper named Clocher-les-Bécasses. It is likely
noticeable to the readers that her last name is a homophone of *la bornée*, a term referring
to someone who is stupid or narrow-minded. In the narrative, this allusion to stupidity is
developed right away. Her birth is marked by immediate concerns regarding her
potential intelligence, which stem from the size of her nose, “... si petit qu’on le voyait à peine” (1). It is explained that the inhabitants of Clocher-les-Bécasses believe that a person’s intelligence is proportional to the length of his nose. The name Bécassine is given to the baby by her uncle Coretin, who compares her profile to that of a bécassine, or snipe, which is a local game bird. The name is ironic, given that the bird’s beak is a direct contrast to the baby girl’s tiny nose. Her intelligence is brought into question again only a few pages later, when readers learn of the toddler Bécassine’s love for milk. However, her father discovers that the milk bought for her at the market is from an ânesse, or female donkey, rather than a cow. Being raised on donkey’s milk only seems to seal the fate already set by her nose: “Une petite qu’a pas de nez, et nourrie à l’ânesse. Va être idiote, bien sûr!” (4). This explicit statement by her father is likely a direct reflection of what Bécassine’s creators had in mind for her.

Bécassine’s many misadventures go on to support what has been alluded to as an inevitable stupidity. As a child for example, Bécassine sees pommes de terres soufflées served at the Grand-Air chateau, and decides to try to make them herself. She blows on potatoes as hard as she can, and then proceeds to find a fireplace bellows to use. When that idea fails, she takes the potatoes to the blacksmith’s workshop to use his enormous soufflet to try to create the dish (L’enfance de Bécassine 26-27). As an adult, readers witness her efforts to protect one of the Grand-Air chateaus from plunder by enemy soldiers during World War I by leaving a sign in the wine cellar that reads: “Tou le vin et empoisonai” (Bécassine pendant la Grande Guerre 8). She also posts a sign next to the well reading “Un traisor et cachai ô fond” in hopes that any soldiers will fall down the
well looking for said treasure (9). Her obvious spelling errors only add to her childlike representation. When Madame de Grand-Air and Bécassine must send Zidore, the kitchen boy, off to the front, Bécassine insists he take the decorative suit of armor from the chateau for protection. Madame de Grand-Air’s response is, “Cette Bécassine! . . . pas de cervelle, mais tant de cœur! (3). It is difficult to tell whether this comment reflects appreciation, pity, or both.

There are other direct references to her intelligence level, such as the fact that thinking seems to be a challenging task. Bécassine narrates in Les bonnes idées de Bécassine: “J’ai mis mon front dans ma main gauche et j’ai dit: ‘Réfléchissons! Réfléchissons!’ Mais j’ai eu beau m’appliquer, il ne m’est pas venu la moindre idée” (24). Then readers see later in this album one of the “good ideas” mentioned in the title, which is to apply a special balm known to grow hair onto the portrait of the deceased Monsieur de Grand-Air, who was bald. She aims to surprise Madame de Grand-Air, who is away, and when the portrait gets ruined, Bécassine is totally surprised (47-50). Madame de Grand-Air pardons Bécassine upon her return, however, because she knows that Bécassine meant well. Despite the element of stupidity with which Bécassine is portrayed, she is a very likeable and good-natured character. She has a heart of gold, but her childish comportment gives her an air of hopeless idiocy at times.

Bécassine’s portrayal in Pierre Caron’s 1940 film does not offer much of a contrast to the Bécassine of the albums. In fact, Forsdick comments, “The film is a peculiar distortion of the BD character in which . . . Bécassine’s stupidity [is] accentuated—she is shown in the first scene, accompanied by a pig on a lead (which she
thinks is a jaguar), pretending to read a Russian newspaper, and claiming Chicago is in Japan . . ” (29). This first scene in which the viewer is introduced to Bécassine takes place on a bus, which is marked as traveling to Clocher-les-Bécasses. Inside the bus, Bécassine is seen reading a Russian newspaper with an alarmed look on her face. However, when asked by another passenger if she reads Russian, she says no, but that she found the newspaper on the bus and decided she should take advantage of it. This seems to imply that she is illiterate, not knowing the difference between Russian and French. The pig in this scene reappears later in the film, and Bécassine is shown feeding it with a bottle and dressing it in a nightcap for bedtime, which make her seem quite childish.

As the primary representation of Breton peasantry in the film, Bécassine does not paint a very flattering picture for the viewer. Aside from the butler in the Grand-Air household, one other character in the film that can clearly be identified as a member of the peasantry is a man that greets Bécassine at the bus station and welcomes her back to town. He reappears later in the movie when he is seen intoxicated wandering down the road, the realization of a common stereotype of Breton people. When he is called upon later to witness who he had seen pass on the road that evening, he is unable to remember what he was doing or whom he had seen. Thus more than one Breton peasant is portrayed in an unflattering light in this film, and although much of the movie is shot in a studio, the film is punctuated with location shots that establish a sense of place, reminding the viewer that these individuals are natives of Brittany. For example, prior to the first scene, the film opens with shots of the Breton countryside, such as unique rock
formations reminiscent of the côte de granit rose, small roadside calvaires, and the beach.

One important aspect of Bécassine’s portrayal in the albums and film alike is her manner of dressing. Bécassine is always depicted wearing a green dress, white apron, and striped stockings. The two parts of her wardrobe that clearly associate her with Breton peasantry are her sabots, or clogs, and white coiffe, or headpiece (see fig. 1).

Although various styles of clogs enjoyed waves of popularity throughout France, Germany, Denmark, and the Netherlands for hundreds of years, by the nineteenth century in France city-dwellers started to turn to manufactured shoes, leaving clogs to be worn almost exclusively by peasants in rural areas. In comparison to the modern and more elegant heeled shoes worn by many French women during the first half of the twentieth century, old-fashioned and utilitarian sabots such as those worn by Bécassine lacked femininity and clearly marked her as native to a rural area. The expression “Je le vois venir avec ses gros sabots” illustrates the connotations of a rude or unrefined nature that have come to be associated with the wearers of these types of shoes. The invariable portrayal of Bécassine in sabots contributes to the stereotypical nature of her image as a simple-minded peasant.

The second element of Bécassine’s appearance that is particularly notable, the coiffe, is a sort of headpiece or bonnet worn by Breton women during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, principally in the countryside. Coiffes originally evolved from religious habits, and their variations also designated one’s social status. Different styles of coiffes were customary in different areas of Brittany, and they were a normal part of local dress for many women. Hélias writes about his mother’s coiffe in The Horse of Pride; in his area of Finistère, coiffes had the appearance of a starched white cylinder, rising up to twelve inches tall. He rarely saw his mother without one, since she woke up as early as five in the morning, “And before even lighting the fire, she would immediately go about putting on her coiffe. She had started doing that at the age of six and had never missed a day since” (275). Thus the coiffe was a normal part of dress for
Breton peasant women and often considered a luxury; however, it was interpreted as a symbol of rural backwardness by city-dwellers who viewed it as an antiquated and superfluous garment.

Morvan Lebesque interprets the coiffe worn by Breton maids as a symbol of subservience: “Les Madames françaises exigent de leur bonne bretonne qu’elle serve en coiffe. D’abord, pour le spectacle, quand on a des invités; ensuite et surtout, pour que cette fille n’oublie pas ses origines. Elle est servante puisque bretonne, renier son pays serait refuser sa condition. . . .” (112). It is not clear in the albums that Madame de Grand-Air ever forces Bécassine to wear her coiffe; rather Bécassine seems to have incorporated the coiffe as a part of her permanent identity. Even when Bécassine travels and performs tasks outside of her responsibilities as a maid, she continues to wear her traditional ensemble. For example, when she takes a job working for the tramway in *Bécassine mobilisée*, she does not wear the tramway’s blue uniform like her other female colleague but rather wears the uniform hat perched on top of her coiffe (15).

In Caron’s film, Bécassine is also dressed in the ensemble designed to replicate the *bande déssinée* depiction, and it is obvious that Bécassine wears what seems to be a costume while the other characters, including the chateau’s butler, wear more mainstream clothing. One interesting scene in the film is near the end when Bécassine is rewarded for discovering who has stolen jewelry from the Grand-Air chateau, and she chooses to have a party at which everyone must wear traditional Breton dress. It is apparent that Madame de Grand-Air is not pleased with the Breton garb, as she tells a male guest that he looks “ridicule” and “grotesque” in his traditional clothing. For the party, Bécassine
wears her normal dress, but dons a fancier lace coiffe meant for a special occasion. The other women, who are mostly bourgeois friends of Madame de Grand-Air, wear much more elegant dresses and coiffes. Thus even when Bécassine is surrounded by others in traditional Breton dress, she still stands out as inferior due to her social standing.

Davreux reminds us that the years of Bécassine’s creation were times of significant evolution in women’s fashion, such as the garçonne era following the First World War: “En voyant ainsi en détail la tenue de Bécassine on peut se rendre compte à quel point elle n’était vraiment pas à la mode” (35). Additionally, Weber notes that evolutions in peasant clothing during this era were due not only to the realization that ready-made clothing was more suited to modern life, but that dress was viewed as a social marker: “To do things the way they were done in the town, to dress the same way especially, was clearly to move up in the world. Peasant costume was often despised as the mark of an inferior condition, not least because so many bourgeois forced their servants to wear it. Looking like Bécassine was not conducive to self-respect” (230).

Bécassine’s ever-present coiffe and clogs were visible and immediate signs of her geographical and social milieu that made her instantly recognizable by her readers. However, they also bestowed upon her a very traditional appearance that took over as a principal aspect of her identity. Whether she was in Brittany, Paris, or travelling abroad, the static nature of her ensemble made Bécassine appear as a folkloric caricature of a Breton peasant woman rather than an accurate representation.
2.2b Reactions to and Effects of Bécassine

It is not difficult to imagine why Bécassine has elicited adverse reactions from defenders of the Breton culture throughout the twentieth century. In fact, the term \textit{bécassine} has been adopted into the French language to refer to a stupid young girl; the word has even made the cut into the pocket version of the dictionary \textit{Le Robert Micro}, defined as “Jeune fille niaise” (“Bécassine,” def. 2). In 1939, for example, a group of Breton activists, likely members of the right-wing group \textit{Breizh Atao}, stole the wax statue of Bécassine from the Musée Grévin in Paris and destroyed it. Lebesque discusses Bécassine in his famous 1968 memoir \textit{Comment peut-on être breton?}, likening her to an “indigène apprivoisé,” echoing the colonialist discourse popular at this time in regionalist writings. His principal critique is that Bécassine is a part of an entire body of literature imported from Paris in order to “éduquer dès l’enfance le futur prolétaire. Son but est de fabriquer des Bécassins et des Bécasses . . .” (113). In other words, Bécassine is a product of the center/colonizer and is then exported to the periphery/colonized, thereby indoctrinating the local people with an image of themselves created by an exterior power.

On the other side of the spectrum, there are scholars such as Raymond Vitruve who find such critiques of Bécassine to be unfounded. Vitruve seems outraged at the thought that Bécassine could be interpreted as a poor reflection of Brittany: “Les Bretons ont prétendu que ‘Bécassine’ ridiculisait, voire même déshonorait leur province!” (121). One of Vitruve’s arguments is that “Monsieur Languereau aurait pu imaginer une Bécassine savoyarde, normande ou auvergnate; elle n’aurait été ni plus sotte ni plus intelligente” (122). While it is true that Bécassine’s creators could have chosen to resist
the archetypal figure of the *bonne bretonne* and opted for a different regional origin for the character, Vitruve’s argument still operates under the assumption that a character such as Bécassine would need a specific regional affiliation, thus still utilizing a center/periphery dichotomy to contextualize her mishaps.

It could be argued that one positive aspect of the Bécassine comics is that Bécassine has many experiences, such as holding a job, driving, and travelling extensively in France and abroad, which would be unique for a woman living in her time. In this sense, could she be considered a heroine ahead of her time and a positive influence on her young female readership? Perhaps, but all of this hardly seems to outweigh what would be considered Bécassine’s personal shortcomings. Although Bécassine is rather avant-garde in all her accomplishments, they all seem to fall into her lap, and she manages to get through them as if only by chance. For example, she travels to the United States in *Bécassine voyage*, but she only goes because she is taken along in the employment of one of Madame de Grand-Air’s friends. She is not a character who fights the status quo; instead, these adventures seem at times incongruous of an individual so respectful of social norms and ruled by devotion to her superiors. Her simple-mindedness and tendancy for mishaps constantly eclipse what would be considered her accomplishments, and thus it would be difficult to view these accomplishments as a prevailing attribute in Bécassine’s portrayal.

In her analysis of regional stereotypes, Bertho mentions Bécassine among other representations of Brittany during the turn of the century that constituted a decisive turn toward the “dérisoire” in the evolution of the regional representations. What is also
significant is that the audience for these representations changed during this period to include not only the bourgeoisie but also the working class and petite bourgeoisie found in Paris and other larger cities throughout France after the rural depopulation. “Tout se passe comme si la représentation de leur civilisation d’origine ainsi offerte aux provinciaux déracinés était juste assez proche de la réalité pour leur permettre de penser ce déracinement et juste assez dérisoire pour décourager toute valorisation d’un monde qu’il faut quitter” (Bertho 62). Thus it was possible that the recent inhabitants of Brittany adopted aspects of these questionable representations as true parts of their native culture. This is one way in which regional stereotypes may affect the formation of regional consciousness.

The second way that these stereotypes may affect regional consciousness is the later rejection of the stereotypes and subsequent efforts to eradicate judgments of a region by outsiders, replacing it instead with what regional activists consider to be authentic representations of a region’s culture. For example, Bécassine perpetuated stereotypes of Brittany and Breton people for generations, which is one principal reason for which Bécassine is now considered by many Bretons to be "le symbole éternellement déplaisant de leur région” (Couderc 217). Morvan Lebesque is a prime example of an individual who once subscribed to regional stereotypes, as I elaborated above, but he later experienced an awakening of his Breton identity and went on to become committed to the emsav when it became associated with the left later in the twentieth century. His writings reflect this commitment to Breton regionalism.
2.3 Cultural Renaissance and the Emsav

My third area of discussion regarding the formation of regional consciousness is the participation of individuals in regional symbolic activities. In Brittany, regional symbolic activities principally manifest themselves as participation in or patronage of cultural practices such as dance, music, and festivals, and it is virtually impossible to separate a discussion of these activities from the formation of the modern Breton movement, which has important roots in the cultural renaissance of the latter half of the twentieth century. Although the emsav has many different components, such as political involvement, cultural support, and language activism, these elements are almost always interrelated. Regional activism in Brittany was negatively impacted by the affiliation with the Nazi regime during World War II. Because of this strong blow to its reputation in the eyes of the public, the movement remained largely apolitical until the 1960’s. While the political regionalism of the early twentieth century was rightist in nature and affiliated with the elite, the political involvement linked with this later cultural renaissance took on a much different character with grassroots leftist ties.

2.3a Cultural Renaissance

Brittany has experienced a strong cultural renaissance in the last fifty years or so. During the late 1960’s and early 1970’s, leftist political consciousness became associated with cultural renewal in the areas of music, dance, festivals, theater, and poetry. Many scholars such as Calin (273-74) and McDonald (81-84) view these transformations in Breton political thought and literary production as phenomena associated with and
resulting from the student rebellions of May 1968. Interest in regional affairs was growing in the 1960’s, and the activities of 1968 brought together questions of social class, colonialism, and regional struggles into a shared discourse. Parallels were drawn between the oppositions of the proletariat versus the bourgeoisie, the colony versus the colonizer, the Third World versus the West, and the peasant versus the urban elite. The education system, especially the universities, came under great attack during May 1968 as an overly-centralized institution that reproduced class structure through the teaching of bourgeois values. Some of these activists viewed Breton-speakers and authentic regional “peasants” as a genuine antithesis of the bourgeois hierarchy of the education system. As the political left became more interested in regional issues, Breton activists began to view the left as a platform for their causes.

In 1964 the Union démocratique bretonne (UDB) was formed, which was the first openly leftist Breton political party. It was at this time that organizations involved in the emsav started to incorporate colonialist discourse when speaking of the relation between France and Brittany. Breton activists characterized the relation between France and Brittany as one of internal colonialism in which France used Brittany merely for its men and resources. They also viewed the absence of the Breton language in education and the media as a form of discrimination against the popular classes of Brittany. Writings from this period, such as Lebesque’s Comment peut-on être breton?, written in May 1968, use colonialist discourse to rouse consciousness of the plight of Brittany. This point of view developed during the 1960’s and 1970’s, emphasizing the exploitation of Brittany’s resources and people by the French, forcing Bretons to leave their homes for Paris where
they were reduced to manual labor. Abandoned farms marred the beauty of the land, and the arrival of tourists deepened the abuse of Brittany by outsiders. Breton identity was lost due to the suppression of the Breton language.

Breton poets of the 1960’s drew from this ideology in their lyrics and verses, identifying the Bretons with the Irish as fellow victims of a postcolonial situation, and the attitude was anti-French. Musicians were also inspired, and an explosion in Breton music added to the already developing renaissance of other traditional aspects of Breton culture. Since the end of World War II when Breton nationalism waned following its affiliation with the Nazi regime, cultural elements were quietly revived, such as bagadoù, marching formations of musicians playing the Scottish bagpipe, and gouren, traditional Breton wrestling. Summer festivals also grew, such as pardons, whose original purpose was to honor a local saint, and included dancing or concerts. Popular Breton-language theater was also produced. A pivotal revival was that of the festoù-noz, or night festival. These are local evening gatherings featuring drinking and traditional Breton song and dance. The fest-noz made its reappearance in the 1950’s, and grew steadily in popularity for decades. These festivals were very widely used for fundraising for different community and militant groups throughout the 1970’s and remain very popular to this day.

The revival of the fest-noz goes hand-in-hand with the popularity of Breton music, as they provided audiences for the growing revival. The folk revivals 1960’s in the United States did not go unnoticed by Breton musicians, and in the 1960’s and 1970’s many Breton pop and folk groups appeared, such as Alan Stivell and Tri Yann, producing
music with Celtic roots and singing in Breton, French or a mix of the two. Traditional music was mixed with contemporary and non-Breton instruments such as the electric guitar, drums, or other acoustic instruments. Lois Kuter describes this period as a “‘Breton is beautiful’ phase of consciousness” (2). This means the goal at this time was to arouse an interest in, appreciation for, or acceptance of the Breton language in a perhaps scornful public through means such as Celtic or Breton-language music. I would like to examine in detail several of Stivell’s early songs for all they may add to an understanding of the various aspects of the Breton cultural renaissance, its role alongside political and linguistic aspects of the emsav, and the ideology motivating and resulting from what may seem to be simply a popular musical trend.

2.3b Alan Stivell

Alan Stivell, who is considered by many to be the father of contemporary Celtic music, was an integral figure during the 1960’s and 1970’s in the production of popularization of Breton and Celtic music and in turn an important symbol of the Breton movement. Stivell is known for being both a singer and instrumentalist, playing the Celtic harp, Breton bagpipes (or biniou), and the bombarde, which is a traditional Breton woodwind instrument. Stivell, born Alan Cochevelou in 1944 to a family of Breton origin, started playing the Celtic harp as a child after his father made one for him in the traditional Breton style. Although he spent his early years primarily in Paris, he pursued studies of other traditional Breton instruments in addition to the Breton language. He made several instrumental recordings during the 1960’s, but it was not until 1970 that
Stivell released his first hit singles, “Brocéliande” and “Reflets,” on the album *Reflets*. These two songs share the aesthetic presentation of Stivell’s vocals accompanied by the Celtic harp, and both contain local Breton references, although each with differing approaches.

*Brocéliande* is the name of a forest near Rennes known for being the setting of several tales of Arthurian legend and according to local folklore possesses supernatural qualities. The refrain of the song is Breton, while the verses are sung in French. Stivell references “Viviana” and “Merzhin” in the refrain, as Brocéliande is known to be the place where the magician Merlin was imprisoned by the fairy Vivien. The song tells of an unfinished quest for Brocéliande, a mysterious and far-away place: “J’ai parcouru nos collines et nos lands / Mais je n’ai pu retrouver Brocéliande.” The song is based on local folklore while highlighting natural scenery such as hills, streams and beaches. However, the fact that the magical destination is not able to be found adds an element of loss and lack of fulfillment. Perhaps this means that this magical aspect of Brittany been lost in modern times, destroyed by its interaction with a perceived French destructive force. Or perhaps this means that the quest for such a Brittany is futile because it is a romanticized representation of a region that should be considered instead in its current cultural and economic situation.

The Celtic aspect of Stivell’s work is highlighted in the first line of the song’s description of the forest: “Celte fontaine, paradis d’hydromel.” The choice of the adjective *celte over bretonne* is an indication of the presence of the larger Celtic world in
his work. In the sleeve notes to his 1974 album *E Langonned*, Stivell comments on the Celtic character of his work:

... la musique bretonne est le produit d’influences diverses difficiles à analyser, le fait est qu’elle est attirée par deux pôles, le pôle français et le pôle celte. ... Ce caractère musical celtique, correspondant à certaines tendances, n’est mis en évidence et accentué que dans une minorité d’airs ... des régions de la langue celtique (basse Bretagne, ouest Galles, Iles Hébrides, gaeltacht irlandais). ... Pour ressentir ce caractère celtique, il faut étudier et jouer ou chanter les airs de ces différentes régions.

His characterization of Breton music is that it is influenced by two primary opposing forces: French and Celtic. He believes that authentic Celtic elements are present in certain musical traditions of Lower Brittany, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. Thus, Breton music cannot be separated from other Celtic musical traditions.

Stivell’s second hit song of 1970, “Reflets,” is similar to “Brocéliande” in that elements of nature play an important role in the song’s message, but this song illustrates a clear sorrow that is not present in “Brocéliande.” The first verse of the song is as follows:

`Et le vent s’est levé
Sur notre terre d’orgueil
Et le vent a soufflé
Sur le dernier cercueil
De larmes en fleuves, de fleuves en torrents
De mers en océans
De larmes en larmes, au déluge ultime
Jamais nous ne comprîmes`

The rivers of tears that flow illustrate a great mourning that is taking place over an atrocity committed on “notre terre d’orgueil,” which refers to Brittany. The mention of the casket could imply either the deaths of Breton men in French wars, which are a point of contention for Breton activists. Alternatively, the casket could represent more general
losses suffered by Brittany in terms of depopulation when young adults leave Brittany to look for work and linguistic and cultural retreat in the face of French influences.

Stivell’s first two hits contain elements of pro-Breton and pro-Celtic sentiment, but the language is relatively subtle compared to later songs, and the strong presence of the Celtic harp in both songs underscores the importance of the presentation of traditional musical elements. Stivell’s 1973 song, “Brezhoneg’ Raok” or “Le crépuscule du breton,” illustrates an evolution in both musical and lyrical style. This song is the only one originally written by Stivell on the album Chemins de Terre, which is otherwise composed of his interpretations of traditional Celtic folk songs. “Brezhoneg’ Raok” is sung entirely in Breton and features the electric guitar as one of the principal instruments. By this time, Stivell was strongly associated with both the Celtic harp and biniou, and he addresses his move to include other instruments in his music in a 1973 article published in Ouest-France. He is quoted: “Il est essentiel de ne pas être possédé par l’instrument. Le biniou, comme la cornemuse et la guitare, est international. Un instrument n’a pas de nationalité” (Cabon). In the sleeve notes to E langonned, he also advocates “mariages inédits d’instruments,” such as American and Irish folk instruments being used to interpret Breton folk songs and the fusion of rock instruments with traditional Breton instruments. The latter may be heard in “Brezhoneg’ Raok,” which features drums and keyboards in addition to the electric guitar, an arrangement for Breton language music that was very innovative at this time.

“Brezhoneg’ Raok” is an appeal to the public in defense of the Breton language. A French translation of the refrain is as follows:
Stivell’s approach in this song is much more direct; he states that there can be no Brittany without the Breton language. The message is bolstered by the fact that the song is sung entirely in Breton. Stivell’s goal was to reach listeners outside of Brittany with his music: “Si j’ai choisi les mass-media . . . c’est que mon but était de toucher le grand public et surtout des gens autres que les touristes et les mouvement bretons” (E langonné). However, one question that may be raised is how effective is a song in defense of the Breton language if it can only be understood by a relatively small audience of Breton speakers? I believe the song works on two different levels to achieve the purpose of language awareness. The Breton speakers understand the message of the song, which is meant to inspire the preservation of the Breton language. For members of the listening public who do not speak Breton, the impact lies largely in hearing a contemporary popular song sung in Breton, which may raise awareness and curiosity even without an immediate understanding of the message.

In an interview with the music magazine Best in 1973, Stivell comments on how his evolution towards rock music may be affecting his audience: “Il y a beaucoup d’amateurs de pop et des amateurs bretons. Lorsque l’on joue, il y a à la fois – et c’est cela qui est important – des spectateurs jeunes et, à côté, une vieille dame de soixante-dix ans, un ecclésiastique, un ethnologue. . . . Chacun prenant quelque chose de différent dans le spectacle” (77). Thus, in addition to assessing the audience in terms of what language they speak and may understand, the audience can also be considered in terms of
age. Stivell’s new combination of popular music with traditional Breton musical elements and language attracted a younger audience that was previously untouched by Stivell’s interpretations of traditional Celtic melodies. As will be examined later in my discussion of language and education, attracting a new, younger demographic into the Breton movement was and is imperative in the preservation of the Breton language and culture, since traditional culture and language is not currently passed down from generation to generation in Brittany.

The last song I would like to examine is the more openly militant “Délivrance,” which was released on the 1975 album *E Dulenn/À Dublin*, a live concert recording in the National Stadium in Dublin, Ireland. The lyrics to this song are entirely in French, and they are largely spoken by Stivell rather than sung, much like a speech set to music. The principal musical accompaniment is a bagpipe melody with background drums. Not only does this song further illustrate Stivell’s personal convictions, it also reveals fundamental characteristics of the Breton movement that still exist today. Because this song directly addresses issues such as Brittany’s relationship with France, one might expect the other songs on the album to be similar in nature. However, the album is made up mostly of traditional Celtic pieces, and “Délivrance” is the only song with French lyrics. Stivell comments on this mixture of songs found on many of his albums: “On ne peut pas…se cantonner complètement dans l’expression de problèmes politiques et c’est pourquoi j’ai toujours fait cohabiter des thèmes à problèmes avec de simples chansons populaires parlant de l’amour, de la mort, de la mer…” (*E langonned*). On this album, Stivell situates a political song among more traditional melodies, which caters to both
enthusiasts of Celtic culture and the more politically engaged, such as members of the Breton movement.

Also notable is that the concert recorded on the album is played in Dublin, Ireland, rather than somewhere in Brittany or France. This helps illustrate the unity that Stivell finds among all Celtic regions and emphasizes in his music. In “Délivrance,” for example, Stivell speaks of tearing down “Les miradors qui nous interdisent nos frères / de Galles, d’Écosse, d’Irlande.” The implication is that France is restricting Brittany’s ties to its fellow Celtic regions. In fact, Stivell believes that Brittany has much closer ties to these regions than it does to France: “On oublie trop souvent que la culture bretonne ne se rattache pas à la culture française. Nous sommes beaucoup plus des Irlandais et des Ecossais que des habitants de l’Ile de France” (Christophe). Later in the song, Stivell refers to “Celtie,” which is a unifying term for all the regions of Celtic origin. The sense of brotherhood that Stivell sees between Brittany and other Celtic countries is reflected both in these lyrics and also in the larger body of his work, which includes not only Breton, but Irish, Welsh, and Scottish pieces.

An especially noteworthy message contained in this song is that Stivell’s fight for Brittany is a pacifist one, which is a fundamental characteristic of the modern Breton movement. The song opens with the following lyrics: “Voici venu le temps de délivrance / Loin de nous toute idée de vengeance / Nous garderons notre amitié avec le peuple de la France.” Although there is a sense of reclaiming Brittany’s identity in the cultural and possibly political arenas, the focus is on deliverance from oppression rather than vengeance against the people of France for any wrongdoing that may have been
committed. Although there have been acts of violence associated with the Breton movement, they have generally been sporadic throughout the twentieth century, and a declaration against violence remains an important tenet of the modern Breton movement which has many roots in the cultural renaissance of the 1960’s and 1970’s.

One final aspect of “Délivrance” that merits consideration is Stivell’s declaration of unity between Brittany and other oppressed areas and peoples of the world. The following lyrics create the image of a Brittany that reaches out to aid those in need around the world:

Nous ferons tomber la pluie sur le monde meurtri  
Et nettoyer le sang graisseux dont se nourrissent les soi-disant puissants  
Et donner à boire aux assoiffés de justice  
Et les feuilles repousseront de Bretagne en Espagne,  
du Mali au Chili, d’Indochine en Palestine.  
Bretagne, centre du monde habité, tu seras un refuge pour les oiseaux chassées pétrolés  
Pour les femmes torturées en prison  
Pour les vieillards bombardés.

Stivell creates the striking image of the oppressors of the world living off of the blood of the oppressed, which can be washed away by the cleansing rain of Brittany. The “nous” here refers to the people of Brittany, portrayed as offering relief to those who are thirsting for justice and spurring new social and cultural growth. Additionally, Brittany is depicted as a place of refuge for the abused and oppressed. Although maintaining a pacifist attitude as stated at the beginning of the song, Stivell makes known through these lyrics that Brittany has suffered wrongdoing at the hands of the French and creates a solidarity between Bretons and other downtrodden peoples of the world. This song also
contains an inspirational component, however; as Brittany rises out of the past and
renews its identity, it can also help others do the same.

These lyrics reflect a worldview that might not be expected from a figure of the
Celtic, and more particularly, Breton musical arena. Stivell addresses how his
involvement in the Breton movement is not limited in scope to the region of Brittany:
“Quand je lutte pour le droit du peuple breton à l’expression, je lutte pour tous les petits
peuples du monde, qui, bien que moins riches et désarmés, sont les égaux des grandes
puissances…” (E langonné). For Stivell, a renaissance of Breton culture and identity is
related to struggles of a more political nature, such as the fight for the rights of the
Bretons to learn their own language and culture. This is done in solidarity with other
“petits peuples” of the world, Celtic or otherwise, who assert themselves in the face of
other “grandes puissances.”

Alan Stivell’s early songs provide insight into many aspects of the ideology
surrounding what could be seen by some as a simple burst in production and popularity
of Breton music. Stivell’s songs held an important place in the development of the
modern Breton movement and both influenced and were influenced by the mindset of
activists of the time. During this era, Stivell was at the forefront of artists around the
globe who combined traditional and modern musical elements, resulting in what came to
be known as World Music. Two familiar examples from the United States would be
Santana, who released the innovative Abraxas album in 1970, combining rock, jazz, and
more traditional Latin melodies, and Paul Simon, whose albums of the 1960’s and 1970’s
featured classical English ballads and reggae in addition to the folk-style music for which
he is best known. These combinations of the traditional and modern illustrate the evolutions that took place in music scenes across the world and the resulting appeal to many possible types of listeners. In Brittany, these listeners ranged from individuals with a simple affinity for the Breton or Celtic culture to those for whom support of the Breton music scene was part of a larger involvement with the emsav, which also contained political and linguistic components.

As one of the most well-known Breton artists, Stivell’s music inspired the creation of countless other Breton musical groups of varying age and style. Many of these newly formed groups came under criticism as lacking authenticity and contributing to a passing fad of Breton culture. Although many older musicians may have been well-educated about traditional Breton music, it is quite plausible that many younger musicians may have adopted tradition Breton tunes without being aware of their original meanings and contexts. I find it interesting that while some questioned the authenticity of the new musical production at this time, there was also an opposing criticism that traditional Breton singers and dancers promoted a stereotypical folklore that catered to outsiders and hindered the creation of a new Breton identity rooted in the present. While the revival of different aspects of traditional Breton culture was a popular way to make the public aware of local practices and heritage, certain factions of the emsav faulted some of these groups, whom they accused of lacking ideological convictions regarding their activities.

Regardless of the debate surrounding Breton music, both traditional and reinterpreted, its popularity persisted throughout the 1980’s and 1990’s to the present.
day. Traditional Breton music in addition to new pop and folk fusion music continue to be patronized by a public with considerably varying views of, levels of involvement in, and perhaps even awareness of the Breton movement. A simple search on Fnac’s website yields over 200 results for albums of Celtic music and almost 100 results for albums of Breton music, not to mention related books and DVD’s. Although his popularity was probably at its height in the 1970’s, Alan Stivell has released albums continuously since then, fusing elements of folk, rock, Celtic harp, and new age, and has collaborated with many other artists. He continues to tour, and a new album was released in November 2009.

2.3c Politics of the Emsav

The Breton movement does have a political component; to be active in a regionalist Breton political party today would mean being a member of the *Union démocratique bretonne* (UDB). The UDB promotes a moderate autonomist platform, as opposed to the more radical goals of a separatist platform, and is far from the nationalist ideology that came to a head during World War II. According to the UDB charter, the UDB works for the administrative reunification of Brittany. This would entail the suppression of the French departments and the reintegration of the territory of the department of Loire-Atlantique and thus the city of Nantes into the modern region of Brittany (“La charte de l’UDB”). The UDB also works for a Europe composed of regions rather than states, and for the right of every Breton to learn the history, language, and culture of Brittany. Electorally, the UDB often aligns itself with other leftist parties.
such as the Verts or the Parti Socialiste. The UDB should not be confused with the FLB, or Front de libération de la Bretagne, which was most active during the 1960’s and 1970’s. The FLB was known for sporadic attacks of violence, which were often bombings representing symbolic attacks against the French state and/or capitalism. A more recent radical group of note is the Armée révolutionnaire bretonne (ARB), who launched a series of attacks in the 1990’s. This group has links to the ETA (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna or Basque Homeland and Freedom), the Basque nationalist organization of Spain.

ARB violence culminated in April 2000 when a bomb at a Quévert McDonald’s failed to detonate at night and instead killed an employee the following morning. This bombing is one component of what is known at the Affaire de Plévin, which refers to the theft of explosives in Plévin in 1999 that supplied the materials for the Quévert attack in addition to other incidents in Pornic and Rennes. The theft was believed to have been carried out by members of the ARB in conjunction with members of the ETA. Public reaction following the incident clearly illustrated a condemnation of violence and outpouring of sympathy for the victim’s family. Although violent incidents in conjunction with the Breton movement were generally sporadic throughout the twentieth century, today there is virtually no violent component in the Breton movement. The UDB’s charter, for example, directly affirms a rejection of violence: “Article 7: L’UDB situe son action politique dans le cadre du débat démocratique, excluant tout recours à des moyens violents.” The rejection of violence in Brittany is in contrast with what
seems to be an unspoken tolerance for violence in Corsica stemming from the FNLC (Front de libération nationale de la Corse) or the ETA in the Spanish Basque Country.

One might wonder whether the notoriety of violent organizations such as the ARB mar the image of the UDB, the pacifist and autonomist Breton political party functioning within the parameters of the French political system. In Le Coadic’s *L’Identité bretonne*, the author interviews 46 Bretons and analyzes their opinions of many different aspects of Breton society, culture, language, and politics. The individuals interviewed were farmers, businessmen and women, and fishermen or their wives. One of the questions asked was what they thought of autonomists. From their responses, Le Coadic concluded that the term autonomist had a negative connotation (341-51). Their responses centered around three themes: that autonomists were linked with extremists, that autonomists are violent, and that their objectives would lead to a Brittany isolated from the outside world.

Le Coadic noted that very little seemed to be known about legitimate Breton political parties, but that the FLB, for example, was directly mentioned by five different individuals in their responses. Obviously this group cannot be considered a perfect sampling of all Bretons, but I believe it contributes an interesting point of view in the portrayal of the Breton movement. It is likely that widely known terrorist groups associated with regional movements outside of Brittany, such as the ETA of the Spanish Basque Country and the FNLC of Corsica, damage the reputations of nonviolent autonomist groups throughout France.

Autonomists in Brittany today face the challenge of overcoming an assumed tendency toward radicalism, violence, or nationalism, characteristics which are not a part
of their platform. Additionally, they must overcome the stigma associated with the early emsav, factions of which chose to support the Nazi regime as a means to the desired end of Breton independence. The political elements of the emsav do not exist in a vacuum, however; there is often overlap in personnel between political involvement and cultural support, and even more often there is overlap in ideology. The songs of Alan Stivell have illustrated that the cultural renaissance of Brittany was not just a passing trend of music and dance; there was a genuine interest in the preservation of authentic traditions; Brittany’s Celtic origins were highlighted both through music and language; and political ideology spilled over from a revitalization of Brittany’s rights in the context of the Hexagon to include a solidarity with other peoples around the world. These factors all shape the emsav that exists today: a movement composed of groups and individuals who are committed to legitimate and pacifist politics, who value the preservation of the traditional Breton cultural components, and who are committed to the defense of the Breton language.

Regional consciousness in Brittany and other regions of France is a product of many variables, and I have chosen to focus on migratory movements, regional stereotypes, and symbolic cultural activities in order to develop a basis for an understanding of the Breton regional movement. These factors were all instrumental in the formation of regional consciousness; for example, the idea of the regions in France did not fully come into being until inhabitants of the different corners of the country
became aware of how their locality fit into the larger national context. This contact among differing populations resulted in the gradual accumulation of regional portrayals by outsiders that eventually evolved into stereotypes. In turn, these stereotypes caused certain characteristics to become crystallized as identifying markers of a region, further cementing a regional classification for both the outsiders and the inhabitants of the region themselves. Symbolic cultural activities in the form of music, dance, and festivals served as vehicles for the realization of a regional consciousness. The popularity of these activities not only strengthens cultural identity, they become interlaced with political involvement and language activism.

Aspects of all three of these factors have at some point fueled contemporary Breton regional activists and their conception of the Brittany-France opposition. Migratory movements were seen as the cause of the depopulation of the Breton countryside and the weakening of traditional ways of life. Regional stereotypes perpetuated a negative portrayal of Bretons; Bécassine, for example, was an effective purveyor of the Breton peasant as “other.” And while cultural elements such as music and dance are an authentic part of Breton identity, they can also contribute to a folklorization of the region that must be resisted.

Although the two well-known Breton personalities of Bécassine and Alan Stivell are not often the subjects of academic study, they have proven to be valuable, as they are both representations and/or vehicles of the Breton people and culture that have reached beyond the borders of Brittany. Bécassine represented Brittany to a wide audience of young readers for decades, a reflection of Breton stereotypes that she simultaneously
perpetuated. Beyond Alan Stivell’s popularity lies a strong commitment to the Breton cause, and his music and lyrics are telling of the ideology of the Breton movement as it first began to gain momentum. These two famous Bretons offer a glimpse of some of the causes and manifestations of Bregion regional consciousness, and they still serve as ambassadors for Brittany, for better or for worse depending on the interpretations of the public.

The creation of regional consciousness that informs a regional movement implies a chain of events that resulted in a group of individuals who feel that a revendication régionaliste is necessary. As Bourdieu stated, regional movements may be seen as the natural result of an oppositional relationship with the capital, and the juxtaposition of the periphery and the center in France may occur on social, cultural, and political levels. These movements exist not only in Brittany, but throughout France, which is a sign that regional cultures are still very relevant to the lives of many individuals and are much more than vestiges of a romanticized peasant lifestyle.

1 The term Occitanisme came into existence during the 1950’s, and is defined by Blanchet and Schiffman as “the movement of actions and lobbying in favor of Occitan” (5). Some view the use of the term Occitan when discussing the language as an oversimplification of the true linguistic diversity among the different southern dialects. However, the terminology has become widely accepted to unify areas where Occitan was originally spoken, such as Provence, Languedoc, and Limousin.

2 For a more detailed analysis of the evolution of portrayals of Brittany in nineteenth-century French literature, see Bertho 51-60.

3 Bande dessinée is most often translated into English as comic strip, although the English term reflects an assumed element of humor that the French term does not. A bande dessinée refers more broadly to a series of images or illustrations that tells a story and is accompanied by text, most often the thoughts and words of the characters or a narrator.
Depending on the length and content of the bande dessinée, it might also be appropriate to use the English term graphic novel.

4 One might argue that although Bécassine has become the most well-known Breton maid in France, the Papin sisters, Bécassine’s real-life contemporaries from Le Mans, achieved a much higher level of notoriety in the French press. In 1933, Christine and Léa Papin were found guilty of violently murdering their mistress and her daughter with a hammer and a kitchen knife and gouging their eyes out. In addition to fascinating the public, the affair was analyzed by Jacques Lacan, inspired the Surrealists, and served as the basis for Jean Genet’s play Les Bonnes. To the public eye, the Papin sisters were symbols of a rustic and brutal peasantry, a very different image than that conveyed by Bécassine.

5 For more on the Breton poets of the 1960’s, see Calin 274-81.

6 The Scottish bagpipe gained popularity in Brittany during the twentieth century, but did not totally supplant the Breton bagpipe, known as the biniou. The biniou is a traditional instrument native to the region and is sometimes referred to as the biniou-kozh, meaning “old bagpipe.”

7 Gouren, also referred to as la lutte bretonne or Breton wrestling, is a martial art that has been practiced in Brittany since the fourth century when the Bretons arrived in the Armorican peninsula. Gouren is still practiced today and is organized under the Fédération de Gouren, which is affiliated with the Fédération Française de Lutte, or French Wrestling Federation. For more information, see the Gouren Federation’s website: <http://www.gouren.com/>.

8 The UDB is the most mainstream of Breton political parties, and it best represents the ideals of the emsav rooted in the cultural renaissance of the 1960’s. There also exist parties advocating a sovereign Brittany, such as the centrist Parti breton and Adsav of the extreme right. For further discussion of political movements of the extreme right that privilege regional identity, see chapter 4.
Chapter 3: The Breton Language and Efforts for Revival

Each regional movement of France contains a significant component of language activism. Basque, Occitan, Corsican, and Breton languages each have deep historical roots within their respective regions and are important symbols of local culture. The situation of each regional language is unique. For example, Corsican boasts the highest percentage of speakers among the inhabitants of its region, while Basque is spoken by many more individuals in Spain than in France. Occitan is composed of many dialects spoken in southern France that have been brought together under one standardized spelling. In Brittany, it is evident that there is a large discrepancy between the vitality of Breton music and dance and the relatively low rate of Breton language use. Various elements of Breton culture have an appeal to individuals ranging from Breton activists in the political or linguistic arenas to aficionados of Celtic culture. However, while Breton culture increased in popularity as the twentieth century progressed, the Breton language has drastically declined in usage.

Understanding the state of the Breton language and how language activists are currently working to revive and promote the language will allow for a more complete analysis of the Breton movement. It will be important to keep in mind that the movement is composed of individuals and groups with various interests in politics, cultural
elements, and language, rather than one heterogeneous society. McDonald comments on the various interactions of these subsidiary groups:

. . . there is some tension between broadly ‘political’ and broadly ‘cultural’ definitions of the cause, as also between those who actually speak Breton and those who do not. However, it is primarily the language issue which has the capacity to unite the movement, and groups of folk-musicians and folk-dancers have been known to make strong political statements in defense of Breton, and thereby maintain some credibility in the eyes of committed *emsaverien*. (74)

This perspective highlights the role that language may have in bringing together the heterogeneous factions working for the preservation of what each considers to be the “true” Brittany.

In this chapter, my focus will be the Breton movement in regards to Breton language use and the systems of bilingual Breton/French schooling and the Breton-language immersion schooling known as *Diwan*. I will examine why these schools are unique in French education system and their potential for increasing the base of present-day Breton speakers. I will also discuss the new standardized Breton and explore its role as the future of the language. It will be helpful to contrast Breton with its Celtic counterparts in the United Kingdom and Ireland to examine how Breton’s status as a regional language of France poses specific obstacles in terms of language use and societal role. I will also take into consideration recent legislative issues including how these new educational structures fit into the current national education system and why the protection of regional languages in general lacks compatibility with the French constitution. My goal will be an understanding of the Breton language’s current role in Brittany and France and why a language that some consider to be en route to extinction
may be able to avoid this fate through its new standardized form. Although this form is considered by some to have only artificial ties to Breton culture, its new cultural value holds the future for a language whose relevance to contemporary society has been diminishing for generations.

3.1 The Breton Language

Fañch Broudic, in conjunction with the research institute Territoires Marchés Opinion Régions, conducted a survey in 1997 on the status of the Breton language, the results of which were published in 1999 in his work *Qui parle breton aujourd’hui?: Qui le parlera demain?* The participants in the survey were all from Lower Brittany, the part of Brittany that is traditionally Breton-speaking, as opposed to Upper Brittany, which has not been Breton-speaking since the 13th century. Lower Brittany is composed of the departments of Finistère, Côtes d’Armor, and Morbihan (see fig. 2). Interestingly, the large cities in the area, Rennes and Nantes, have always been francophone cities. Rennes is located in Upper Brittany in the department of Ille-et-Vilaine, and Nantes is located in the department of Loire-Atlantique, whose territory was a part of the historical province of Brittany but today is outside of the modern regional borders. Broudic estimates that there are currently 370,000 people who understand Breton and 240,000 people who speak it. This means that 20% of the inhabitants of Lower Brittany can speak Breton today, as opposed to the estimated 75% who could do so in 1950. He found that 15.5% of Lower Bretons can read Breton, while only 8% can write Breton. In addition to these meager numbers, an important issue is the aging of the Breton-speaking population: 45% of
Breton speakers are over the age of 75. Even more disturbing to sociolinguists is that the intergenerational transmission rate of Breton is at 0%; this means that Breton is not being passed down from one generation to the next. Not surprisingly, in response to the question of what being Breton means to them, only 11.5% of participants in this study identified the ability to speak Breton. More frequent answers were that of being born in Brittany (49.5%) and living in Brittany (29%).

The Breton language clearly falls into the category of a threatened language as defined by sociolinguist Joshua A. Fishman. Fishman discusses threatened languages...
and if and how to save them in his work, *Reversing Language Shift*, referred to as RLS.

He states:

Threatened languages, for which RLS-efforts are required in order to save them from erosion and ultimate extinction, are languages that are not replacing themselves demographically, i.e. they have fewer and fewer users generation after generation and the uses to which these languages are commonly put are not only few, but, additionally, they are typically unrelated to higher social status (prestige, power) even within their own ethnocultural community, this being a reflection of the relative powerlessness of the bulk of their users. (81)

It is only logical that a language that is not passed down from one generation to the next will eventually cease to be spoken. In Brittany, as in other regions of France, this has partly been the result of language-planning by the French government since the time of the Third Republic to spread the French language to all corners of the country. The all-pervasiveness of the French language in Brittany has meant that numerous decades have passed since it was necessary to speak Breton, even in Lower Brittany, to be fully integrated into society. In terms of social prestige, French has long been associated with the educated upper classes, leaving Breton to be spoken by the peasants. In fact, a 2002 INSEE study on foreign and regional languages in France states that one is much more likely to have learned a regional language from a parent if that parent is a farmer or member of the working class (Clanché 3). Overall, it is clear that speakers of Breton have been diminishing for many years, and direct intervention seems necessary to preserve the language, which is where the language activists of the Breton movement enter into my discussion.

One might wonder how the Breton language could hold such importance for Breton activists when so few people actually speak Breton. Or perhaps it is because so
few people speak Breton that the defense of the language holds such importance for language activists. Regardless, the defense and propagation of the Breton language is a vital component of the Breton movement. In the preface of his work, *The Rise and Fall of the Ethnic Revival*, Fishman examines the ways in which language and culture are related (xi-xii). He states that they are related in three major ways, the first being that language is a part of culture, through ceremonies, songs, and rituals, for example. The second is that language is an index of culture which reveals how a certain ethnoculture thinks and organizes experiences through its lexicon and groupings of language referents. Thirdly, language is a symbol of its culture, evidenced for example by how language movements use language to mobilize individuals for or against a language and its corresponding ethnoculture.

I find that the symbolic role of language in relation to culture is of particular interest in the context of the Breton movement, considering the small number of Breton-speakers there are in relation to the great popularity of other traditional cultural elements. Broudic observes that among participants and spectators at cultural gatherings such as *bagadoù*, those who speak Breton fluently are a clear minority (111). Thus, the Breton language is indeed a part of the Breton culture, but speaking the language is not a prerequisite for patrons of the culture. The symbolic role of the Breton language becomes more apparent when considering how many Bretons believe the preservation of the Breton language is important, even if they themselves are not able to speak the language. In a study by Rachel Hoare, Breton schoolchildren were interviewed in order to examine the correlations between the ability to speak Breton and perceptions of Breton
identity. Results of the study showed an interesting discrepancy between the desire to preserve Breton and the desire to actually learn Breton and participate directly in its preservation; 74% of respondents agreed that it is important to preserve the Breton language, while only 16% of respondents stated that they would be very interested in improving their own comprehension skills (343). Hoare concludes:

> The questionnaire data suggests that the use of Breton as a component of Breton identity is partly communicative and partly symbolic. This corresponds to the notion of an ‘associated’ language, and demonstrates a continuing attachment, whether conscious or subconscious, to a language no longer widely spoken as a native language, but whose communicative revival is constantly being promoted with ever-increasing opportunities for expansion of one’s personal command of the language. (343)

Thus, some perceive the Breton language to be important as a communicative device, with grandparents for example, while others view the language as a symbol of the Breton identity, whether they themselves speak the language or not. This occurs in conjunction with the ever-growing awareness of the opportunities language activists have created in Brittany for learning Breton, such as language courses both inside and outside of schools and Breton immersion schooling.

3.2 Learning Breton

3.2a Adults

For beginners interested in learning Breton, correspondence courses and weekend or evening courses are the popular choices outside of the education system. For example, the organization *Skol Ober* (Action School) has offered correspondence courses since its founding in 1932. Each course costs only 35 euros, or 20 euros for students, and the
Graders of students’ work are all volunteering members of Skol Ober. Students communicate with the organization via mail or email in order to submit their work and then receive feedback from the graders. Another well-known organization, Skol an Emsav (School of the Emsav), which is located in Rennes, offers a variety of evening and weekend courses in addition to summer courses. The organization was founded in 1969 and continues to be associated with language activists of a more militant nature whose philosophies coincide with the discourses popular at that time. Their courses are specifically geared toward adults, and they charge 175 euros for two hours of class per week for a year, or 110 euros for students. Emphasis is placed on the oral aspects of the language through games, songs, and sketches, for example (“Déroulement des cours et pédagogie”). The organization puts forth both a monthly magazine in Breton named Bremañ, and a weekly online publication named Bremaik.

Breton is also studied at the university level. The universities at Rennes and Brest both have Celtic departments and offer the degrees of licence, which is three years of post-secondary study, and master, which requires two additional years. The form of Breton studied as a second language in classes both inside and outside the educational system is a standardized Breton, which differs from the dialects once spoken by many inhabitants of Brittany as their first language. The Breton language in its natural state is actually divided into four main dialects, which are named after the four ancient regions of Lower Brittany known as pays: Kerne, Leon, Treger, and Gwened, which are the Breton names for Cornouaille, Léon, Trégor, and Vannetais (see fig. 3). The Kerne, Leon, and Treger dialects have many similarities, and are referred to as the KLT group, as opposed
Fig. 3: Traditional pays of Brittany

to the Gwened dialect. However, a standardized and unified Breton has been created, which is referred to as the zh version of the language. The ‘zh’ refers to a unified orthography that allows for a ‘z’ pronunciation in the Gwened dialect where there is otherwise an ‘h’ pronunciation in the KLT group. For example, the KLT group refers to “Brittany” as Breiz, while the Gwened dialect uses the word Breih. It was under the direction of the influential Breton scholar Roparz Hemon in 1941 that the Breton language was first unified, and although other spelling systems are in use, it is the zh version that is most widely used by Breton educators today. Additionally, standardized Breton avoids influence from French. Whereas the natural dialects borrowed from
French when new words were needed for modern concepts, for standardized Breton, new words are created from Celtic roots or borrow words from other Celtic languages.

Those who choose to study Breton as a second language and learn the newer standardized form of the language are known as néo-bretonnants. This younger generation of Breton speakers is generally associated with the Breton movement, especially the language and political activism, and the name serves to distinguish them from those who are considered the native speakers of Breton. Mari C. Jones explores how the different dialects of Breton may have created barriers among Breton-speaking communities in the past and the potential role of the standardized version to unite Breton-speakers. She views the new Breton as an essential symbol of “pan-Breton identity.” In reference to the Breton language, she states: “The highly standardized variety…although not a pragmatic tool of communication within the region has, for the Néo-bretonnants, become a badge of regional identity, as much a symbol of Breton-ness as the Breton flag, the Gwenn ha du” (134). Jones references the Breton flag as a very visible symbol of Brittany, the modern version of which was created in 1925 (see fig. 4).

Fig. 4: The Gwenn ha du
Jones notes that the new Breton is not a practical tool of communication within Brittany. While néo-bretonnants certainly have the ability to communicate with each other in new Breton, only a small percentage of native Breton dialects have enough in common with the new Breton to allow for easy communication. French is by far the default language among inhabitants of Brittany. McDonald also explores the gap between original Breton dialects and the new Breton. She concludes:

Putting it perhaps over simply, we can say that the militant world and the popular world have different ‘Bretons’. They are not talking the ‘same’ Breton; they are not talking about the same thing in commentary upon Breton; they do not have the same social value of Breton; they do not share the same level of education or the same linguistic and social sensibilities and competences. They are not, we might say, speaking the same ‘language’. (279)

What is most important to take away from these observations is that when I speak of Breton learnt as second language, for example in the discussion of immersion schooling that follows, it is a language whose referents and organization differ from the Breton spoken in rural areas of Brittany throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Recalling Fishman’s explanation of the roles language has in relation to culture, the second is most pertinent here: that language is an index of culture which reveals how a certain ethnoculture thinks and organizes experiences through its lexicon and groupings of language referents. The cultural referents of the new Breton are very different from those of the original Breton dialects, which contributes to the gap between the two types of Breton. However, the new Breton is perhaps what is saving Breton from extinction and renewing the Breton language for modern usage.
3.2b Bilingual Schooling

When Broudic’s survey completed in conjunction with TMO Régions asked participants their opinions regarding the preservation of the Breton language, 88% responded that it is necessary to preserve Breton. Of these participants, 72% were in favor of optional Breton courses in all schools, while 7% were in favor of required Breton courses in all schools. Another group of 16% was in favor of Breton being taught in special bilingual schools such as the Diwan. Diwan is the system of Breton-language immersion schooling founded in 1977, whose name means “seed” or “germination.” These numbers illustrate a desire among the survey participants to keep Breton safe from extinction, but an obvious hesitation to make learning Breton a requirement for all children schooled in Brittany.

The Ministry of Education in France is represented at the regional level by the various Rectorats, Brittany’s being embodied by the Académie de Rennes. In terms of the Breton language education offered, the Academy views three distinct categories: bilingual public schooling, bilingual private schooling, and Diwan schools. As the name states, bilingual schooling offers bilingual education; for example, children in bilingual primary schools learn to read first in French and then in Breton, as opposed to the full immersion in Breton offered by the Diwan system. Children who have had bilingual primary schooling can continue into bilingual secondary schooling through high school, while others who wish to learn Breton starting at the secondary level may choose what the Academy calls enseignement optionnel de breton at certain institutions that offer
Breton as an elective course two or three hours per week. Later students may choose Breton as their second or third modern language in high school.

Public bilingual education has existed since 1982, and there was a *circulaire ministérielle* written in 2001 to outline its main principles. For example, it is stated that bilingual public schooling is opened in response to community demand. Any student is allowed to enroll, regardless of whether their parents are Breton speakers. If the Ministry of Education determines that there will be a sufficient number of students enrolled and a preschool class is opened, the students are guaranteed bilingual education through the *baccalauréat*. However, this is also dependant on the availability of resources and teachers. Militant groups exist to help organize parents who desire bilingual education in their communities. The group *Ya d’ar brezhoneg* (*Oui au breton*/Yes to Breton), for example, fights for the use of Breton in public life, such as street signage and government documents. They are strong proponents of bilingual education, and much of their website is dedicated to educating parents about their rights to bilingual education, the progress of the openings of bilingual schools, and the obstacles different communities face in obtaining bilingual schooling. Their complaints are, for example, that the Ministry of Education does not act fast enough to meet the needs of the communities or that there are not a sufficient number instructors in place in bilingual classes.

Despite complaints such as these, the Ministry of Education has shown that it does address bilingual education demands in Brittany. There are thousands of students throughout Brittany who are enrolled in bilingual education sanctioned by the state. According to the *Office de la langue bretonne*, there were 12,333 children learning
Breton in either bilingual public, bilingual private, or Diwan schools in 2007, which translates to 1.38% of all schoolchildren in Brittany ("Les chiffres clés"). The highest concentration of students can be found in the department of Finistère. According to the statistics put forth by the Académie de Rennes in the Dossier de presse for the start of the 2008-2009 academic year, just over 2% of students in public schooling and just over 2% of students in private schooling are on the bilingual track (4). If we also take into consideration the Diwan system, approximately 3% of all students in the department of Finistère are receiving Breton language education through either bilingual or immersion schooling.

The Ministry of Education has recognized challenges in the implementation of bilingual schooling and the teaching of regional languages. The Ministry’s evaluation of the Académie de Rennes published in 2000 contains an appendix dedicated to the teaching of regional languages. The appendix contains a list of “points plutôt préoccupants,” and one of the stated concerns is that the Breton language is in direct competition with other modern languages that students choose to study in preparation for the baccalauréat. As a topic of study, Breton is identified as a “choix du 'coeur’” (141), or choice of the heart, that ranks below other languages in terms of practicality or utility. Another challenge identified is the recruitment of teachers, especially at the elementary level. As student enrollments grow larger, it becomes more and more difficult to find individuals that are both Breton speakers and that have proper pedagogical training. As mentioned above, this is one of the issues about which the group Oui au breton often petitions the Académie de Rennes, but this is not a problem that can be rectified.
overnight. Although the number of students enrolled in the Celtic departments at the universities in Rennes and Brest continue to grow, it is not guaranteed that many of these individuals intend to enter the field of primary education. Also, because the renaissance of the Breton language continues, other opportunities for these students exist, such as working in the media or teaching courses for adult students.

In terms of what types of parents choose bilingual education for their children, Le Coadic makes an interesting observation based on data from the mid-nineties. He found that farmers, who make up the socio-professional category most likely to be native speakers of Breton, are least represented among the professions of parents who have enrolled their children in bilingual education (240-43). Conversely, the category of professions intermédiaires, such as teachers and nurses, are among the least likely to be native speakers of Breton, but this category is highly represented among the parents of children in bilingual education. These divergences underscore the perceived distance between the native speakers of Breton and those that preserve or defend the language. Le Coadic ventures several possible explanations for this distance, but the most obvious would be that those who are most likely to be native speakers of Breton were also those mostly likely to suffer the stigmatization of speaking the language, or perhaps to have immediate relatives who suffered. Thus the perceived value of speaking Breton is very low due to the language’s association with the peasantry, but also due to the perception of Breton as unfit for modern life or intellectual activities created in part by the language eradication efforts of the French state during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.
During the twentieth century, it was not until the Deixonne law of 1951 that the place of regional languages such as Breton in the school system was addressed. This law stated that the study of langues et dialectes locaux (local language and dialects) would be encouraged in the regions in which they are in use. The local languages specifically targeted were Breton, Basque, Catalan, and Occitan. It was also stated that these language were authorized for use in the classroom, notably in order to help teach French. At this time teachers had already been speaking regional languages to teach French, but what is significant is that with this law the practice was officially approved by the state. Also notable is that the regional languages were referred to in official documents as “local languages and dialects,” which is a minor improvement over the pejorative term “patois” that was often found in official documents up to this time. The Deixonne law was the first piece of legislation to create a formal and legitimate connection between regional languages and the public school system. For many decades prior to 1951, the most significant link between regional languages and public schooling was that these languages were not permitted to be spoken in public classrooms.

A notable document specifically concerning the status of the Breton language is the Charte Culturelle Bretonne of 1977, which was approved by representatives of the national, regional, and departmental governments in Brittany. The three sections of the Charter addressed the teaching of Breton language and culture, the place of Breton language and culture in the media, and Breton cultural heritage, respectively. The Charter recognized the personnalité culturelle de la Bretagne (cultural personality of Brittany) and proposed the formation of the Cultural Council of Brittany, which was
indeed created in 1978. Concerning the teaching of Breton, the Charter addressed several topics, including the encouragement of the teaching of Breton culture in French. The Deixonne law had also authorized the teaching of Breton culture, but had mentioned it in terms of “folklore,” which could give the impression that the subject was of a lesser status than other school subjects. Breton language was to become a course that students in middle school and high school could take during normal school hours, as opposed to the after-school status that it had held before. It was officially approved as a possible subject for the “second language option,” which students select in middle school, and could also now be chosen as a “language and culture” option for the baccalauréat. Additionally, the Charter addressed the need for courses for future teachers of Breton and stated that historical and cultural research concerning Brittany would be encouraged at the secondary and university levels. Overall, the Charter was notable because it officially brought Breton language and culture into the school system as legitimate topics of study, although it did take several years for the curriculum changes to be widely adopted.

3.2c Diwan

In addition to being the year the Charter was signed, 1977 was important for Breton language education because it was the year that the militant organization Diwan was founded. Parents and members of the Diwan organization opened the first full-immersion Breton language school five years prior to the creation of public bilingual schooling in 1982. The Diwan schools are modeled after the ikastola, which are Basque-medium schools first opened in the French Basque Country in 1969. Diwan schools are
free, non-denominational, and open to all students. According to the charter, available on Diwan’s website, the reason for Diwan’s existence is that its founders felt that the national education system had fallen short in giving the Breton language its proper place in schools (“La charte des écoles Diwan”). Therefore, it is through Diwan’s “reformed and democratic public education” that Breton-medium education is made available from the preschool through university levels. The charter is clear to state that Diwan schools are laïques, or secular, which has been one of the cornerstones of the public education system in France since the 1880’s. Also mentioned is Diwan’s opposition to linguistic unification, which is a reference to the new unified form of the Breton language. Efforts are made to teach the local dialect of Breton in preschools, but some linguistic unification has been adopted for practical purposes; for example, zh orthography is used in Diwan when students begin to write.

The charter emphasizes the collaborative nature of the schools, which call for the cooperation of parents, teachers, and local governments. Diwan schools are described as associatives, which means that they are community-based and non-profit and rely on community support and cooperation for their survival. Officially, Diwan schools are private schools that are “under contract” with the state, which means that their curriculum is approved by the state so as to receive subsidies, but funding is also received through local governments and private sources. Diwan emphasizes to the public that the curriculum and teachers are of equal caliber as those in other public and private schools, and Diwan students all take the same standardized exams as students in other schools. In order to train and certify teachers, Diwan opened Kellen in 1997, a state-approved center
for pedagogical training located in Quimper. During the 2008-2009 school year, Diwan employed 320 individuals in teaching roles, including certified teachers, student teachers, and principals (Diwan 2).

Funding has always been difficult for Diwan because of the commitment to offer free education. They have applied for the status of public schooling in the past, which has been a somewhat turbulent process. In 2001, the Minister of Education at the time, Jack Lang, signed a protocol of integration approving the transition of Diwan schools into the public sphere. However, the following year the Conseil d'Etat repealed the protocol, mainly due to questions regarding the compatibility of immersion schooling in a language other than French with the national education system. This decision came in the wake of France’s decision not to ratify the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in 1999.

The European Union adopted this charter in 1992, and it came into effect in 1998 when Switzerland ratified it as the fifth member of the Council of Europe. The Charter sets targets for the use of minority languages in public life, such as education and law. In May of 1999, France signed the Charter, but the following month the Conseil Constitutionnel declared that the Charter was incompatible with the French Constitution, specifically Article 2: “La langue de la République est le français.” No other language but French is allowed for use in public life. Additionally, the French state does not recognize any minority groups within its citizenry, and conferring special rights to speakers of minority languages would be contrary to this principle. Prime Minister Jospin requested that President Chirac amend the constitution to allow for the ratification
of the Charter, but he refused. Three years later when the question arose of whether Diwan would be granted public status, the role of the French language as it pertains to both the citizenry and the constitution was still a fresh matter of debate. Diwan schools seemed to fall into the same gray area as the Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, which was ultimately ruled unconstitutional.

Today Diwan remains largely self-financed. In 2007, 50% of Diwan’s operating costs were self-financed, and the largest subsidies were provided by Brittany’s Regional Council (18%) and Finistère’s General Council (23%) (Diwan 14). As of September 2008, there are 3076 students enrolled in Diwan schools, which include 38 pre- and primary schools, six middle schools, and one high school. Diwan schools are located throughout Brittany, with the majority located in the department of Finistère. There are three schools in the department of Loire-Atlantique, outside of the modern regional borders of Brittany, and there is one in Paris. Despite a slight stagnation between 2002 and 2003, enrollment has increased steadily the past few decades. In 1989 for example, there were approximately 600 students enrolled in Diwan schools, a number which has since doubled twice. In 1977 when Diwan was founded, a single preschool was opened. The first primary school was opened in 1980, the first middle school in 1988, and the first high school in 1994.

The characteristic that distinguishes Diwan from bilingual schools, and also the characteristic that prevents Diwan from being given a public statute, is its use of linguistic immersion. Bilingual public and private schools give French and Breton approximately equal shares in the classroom, whereas Diwan privileges Breton.
Immersion is used by Diwan as a means to achieve bilingualism, not monolingual Breton-speakers. At the *maternelle*, or preschool/kindergarten level, instructors only speak Breton. Diwan explains that if a student whose parents are francophone attends Diwan during regular school hours but speaks French at home, then 25-30% of his/her waking hours will be spent in a Breton-speaking environment ("L’immersion"). Thus although the student is schooled completely in Breton, less than half of his/her time is spent with Breton. The student is exposed to the French language the remainder of his/her time, whether that be at home with family, with friends, or through exposure to the media. Starting in elementary school, students learn to read in French, and the hours of instruction in French are gradually increased to seven hours per week by the end of primary school. The middle and high school schedules are more complex, but the majority of instruction is given in Breton, with French and other foreign languages supplemented according to a student’s study track.

Test results have shown that students educated in Diwan schools have higher competences in Breton than those educated in bilingual schooling. According to a study conducted by the *Académie de Rennes* in 2003, Diwan students outscored students from bilingual schooling in written and oral comprehension and expression of the Breton language (Diwan 11). Additionally, when compared with national statistics, Diwan students also have a higher percentage of success than the national average in French language testing conducted at the beginning of middle school. Concerning the *baccalauréat*, Diwan students have had a success rate between 90% and 100% for the last ten years. This is above the national rate for the same period, which has ranged from
78% to 85%. Thus, it seems that Diwan’s pedagogical method of immersion does not lead to the success in one language at the expense of another. What should be especially notable to detractors of Diwan is that students are excelling in French, “the language of the Republic” according to the constitution, in addition to Breton.

Diwan, in addition to bilingual schooling, plays an important role in the preservation of the Breton language. While the number of native speakers of Breton continues to decrease each year, in great part due to the natural aging of the Breton-speaking population, Diwan helps shift the demographic of Breton-speakers and creates a brighter future for the language. Breton activists are not the sole group to view immersion schools as a way to preserve their language. As mentioned above, the model for Diwan schools were the ikastolak of the French Basque Country, and there are other immersion schooling systems for other regional languages, such as the calendretas for Occitan and the Scola corsa system for Corsican. But how effective can these schools be in saving their respective regional languages?

In his discussions of RLS (reversing language shift) and the saving of threatened languages, Fishman raises concerns about the effectiveness of schools in increasing mother tongue transmission. According to Fishman, an important part of successful RLS is the increase of intergenerational transmission, by which a language is passed from one generation to another as a mother tongue. Fishman cautions that without intergenerational transmission, schooling alone cannot make a significant impact in RLS. This is because each new generation would start at the same difficult point as the one before: monolingual children learning a threatened language in school, with little
language reinforcement from a family or community that is itself vastly monolingual 
(*Reversing Language Shift* 368-71). Schooling cannot reintegrate a language into a
society if the language is not adopted into the family setting. As previously mentioned,
the intergenerational transmission rate for Breton is currently at 0%, so according to
Fishman’s principles, future ex-Diwan students will need to pass Breton along to their
children in order to make a significant impact on Breton use by creating increasing
numbers of family and community niches for the language.

In fact, this very process played a role in the original language shift in the French
peasantry away from regional languages and towards French. Individuals that learned
French in public schools or during military service in the late nineteenth and early
twentieth centuries passed French onto their own children, thus eventually relegating the
school system to only a secondary role in language acquisition. The primary role came to
be held by francophone parents and media that introduced and reinforced language
learning outside of the school setting. These individuals saw the value in speaking
French, a language that could offer new opportunities in education and work for
themselves and their children.

Although Fishman’s principal caution is that schooling alone cannot be
responsible for saving a threatened language, he does identify important roles that
schools do hold in RLS efforts. Aside from the teaching of a threatened language,
schools are often the first agencies to articulate what many adults strongly
believe but which few can articulate well, namely, that for any given
ethnohistorical aggression a given language with which it has been long
and intimately associated is more than just an interchangeable “means of
communication”, because it also symbolically implements and activates
the historically associated culture that it quintessentially expresses.” (372)
This is partly why Diwan is so important to Breton language and culture activists; Diwan schools not only teach the Breton language and thus help to preserve it, they pass down a knowledge and appreciation of the Breton culture that is precious to the militant community.

Thus, from a sociolinguistic perspective, it remains to be seen how effective immersion and bilingual schools will be in the long-term preservation of Breton and other regional languages. Despite uncertainties, as Stefan Moal wrote in 2003, “After twenty-six years, Diwan is still of great symbolic importance to Bretons. It…represents the embodiment of their hopes that their language can somehow be saved: the last chance, so to speak” (345). These hopes are realized in part by the fact that bilingual and immersion schooling in Breton has gained legitimacy over the last thirty years as acceptable ways to educate children in France.

3.2d Comments on Breton Schooling

The French state’s varying involvement and approval of education in and of the Breton language illustrates an evolution in the form and function of the national education system. However, the question is how radical is this evolution? According to Bourdieu and Passeron’s analyses put forth in *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, an educational system serves as a means of cultural and social reproduction, or the reproduction of the cultural and social systems of which it is an institution (54). Additionally, the dominant cultural components of a society will be those that best reflect the interests of the dominant classes of that society (9). Thus if applied to France, the
national educational system would be one that reproduces the cultural components valued by the dominant classes of French society and the social system by which those classes retain their dominance.

In short, taking into consideration the linguistic history of France, an important goal of the educational system was to create good French-speaking citizens of the Republic. This was reflective of the values of the francophone dominant classes, who believed spreading the language was one of the essential components to creating a unified nation. Among the dominated classes was the non-francophone peasantry, much of whom were agriculturally based. Efforts to realize a French-speaking France are often noted in the context of the Third Republic, but the process of nation-building dates back to the Ancien Régime and the centralizing policies of Napoleon Bonaparte, such as the implementation of the metric system and the French franc. Thus the proliferation of the French language, often through the educational system, has been a vital part of a long process undertaken by various ruling classes to create and preserve a unified France.

Within this framework, the creation of Diwan and other regional language immersion schooling may seem like a radical shift in the educational sphere because those who were once dominated broke out of the current educational system to create an alternative in which their own language and cultural values would have a place. An educational space was created in which education would take place in Breton, a language that did not have a significant position in the public schools. However, it should be noted that Diwan is a system of private schools that exists outside of the French public education system; the case of public French/Breton bilingual schooling is a bit different.
Because Diwan exists apart from the public schooling system, it could be argued that Diwan schools have not significantly impacted the national education system aside from creating the pressure on the state to open its own bilingual schools. These bilingual public schools do have a place within the national education system. French and Breton are given approximately equal shares in the classroom; and therefore Breton assumes a state-supported role in the education system.

If an education system reproduces the cultural system of the dominant classes, and if the French education system has provided state-approved Breton language education, does this mean that Breton has become a cultural component valued by the dominant classes of society? Breton is not allotted more time in the public classroom than French, but it is given the same priority as French. Perhaps it is not the Breton language and culture that has specifically become a cultural component valued by the elite; rather, perhaps it is a changing perspective on bilingualism and what languages are fit for the children and adolescents of France. If Breton is considered a part of the cultural heritage of France, or patrimoine, then it is more likely to be viewed as an acceptable language to teach and to speak.

The main supporters of Diwan and bilingual schooling are the urban petite bourgeoisie, and Le Coadic ventures an explanation of the social distance between native speakers of Breton and these néo-bretonnants that is relevant here. He states: “Le déperissement de la langue bretonne dans les campagnes…lui confère une valeur nouvelle. Elle devient un capital culturel rare, que s’approprie une nouvelle bourgeoisie” (243). In other words, because the Breton language is becoming increasingly rare as a
native language, it is becoming increasingly valuable to a new or emerging group of elites. Thus, perhaps the new Breton taught in most schools should be considered to be a different cultural component than the Breton spoken by native speakers, each with differing cultural worth.

Although the urban petite bourgeoisie is not the traditional dominant social class, in this context the urban petite bourgeoisie of Brittany seems to take on the role of the *nouvelle bourgeoisie* referred to by Le Coadic in its interest in and support of the new Breton. If this emerging *nouvelle bourgeoisie* values the new Breton, then its appearance in schools would be the natural result of an educational system reproducing cultural components valued by the leading classes or those holding such a role. From this perspective, it could be argued that the creation of Diwan and bilingual schooling is then not a radical shift in the educational sphere because the Breton language previously suppressed in the schools was in fact a separate entity from the new Breton that is now embraced by certain groups.

Breton language activists work to preserve the Breton language in the face of extinction, but the surviving Breton has a societal role and cultural value that is vastly different from the rural Breton once spoken, which essentially means that the old Breton is already extinct. Language activists are spreading a new language rather than preserving an old one, and this new language is valued by new groups and has consequently found its way into the education system. The same framework could be applied to Breton culture in that the new popular Breton culture’s societal role and
cultural value are quite different from the traditional elements of Breton culture with strong roots in the rural communities and ways of life of the past.

3.3 Comparison with other Celtic Languages

In 1996 the European Union published *Euromosaïc*, a report on minority language groups in the EU. The report examined the situations of 48 minority languages spoken in the European Union, including Breton and several of its Celtic relatives such as Irish, Welsh, and Scottish Gaelic. The 48 languages were examined in terms of support and usage in such categories as family, cultural reproduction, prestige, and education and then placed in a ranking order. Of the four Celtic languages considered here, Welsh ranked the highest at 11, Irish and Scottish Gaelic at 13 and 14 respectively, and Breton much lower at 32 (65). While comments remain brief regarding individual languages, Welsh is mentioned to have “high support in both education and the media and a fairly high degree of language prestige” (22). By contrast, one of the problems Breton faces is that its limited penetration into modern economic activities leads to an association of the language with a “traditional” world, limiting its prestige value (22). These rankings serve as an interesting point of departure for the comparison of Breton with the circumstances of its Celtic counterparts.

According to *The Welsh Language Use Surveys of 2004-06*, 20.5% of all people aged three and over living in Wales can speak Welsh, which equals approximately 588,000 people (10). Although the number of Welsh-speakers was in steady decline throughout the twentieth century, the results of the 1991 census revealed that the number
had stabilized at 18.6% of the population (J. Davies 96) and has now been shown to be growing. The early twentieth century witnessed a large influx of English-speaking workers, mostly in coal-mining areas, which caused a dilution of the Welsh language that had already been abandoned by the upper classes. Janet Davies also notes that once industrialization ended and coal mining was abandoned in the 1930’s, emigration to England seemed the only option for many, and as a result the utility of Welsh was perceived as very low (91). This meant fewer adults were passing the language onto their children, contributing to the decline of the language. This is similar to the trend in Brittany of parents failing to see the value of Breton for their children; however, unlike Breton, Welsh had the advantage of a previously established urban presence dating to the rural depopulation of the early 1800’s.

Education reform was an important step in the revitalization of the language, starting in 1947 with the opening of the first Welsh-medium school, and a dozen more were opened in the next few years. Originally the schools were meant for children whose mother tongue was Welsh, but by the 1950’s the schools drew the majority of their students from English-speaking homes (J. Davies 79). Welsh classes for adults also grew during the second half of the twentieth century and there was an expansion of Welsh usage in universities. According to statistics published by the Welsh government, in 2007 there were 466 Welsh-speaking primary schools enrolling 54,100 students, which was 20.3% of the primary school population. This is a vastly greater percentage than the 1.38% of children enrolled in Breton-language schools. Additionally, 15.4% of secondary school students were taught Welsh as a first language, and 83.7% were taught
Welsh as a second language (Welsh in Schools 2007 3). The teaching of Welsh in all public schools has been required since 2000.

A vital step for the Welsh language regarding its status in public life was the passing of The Welsh Language Act of 1993, which stated that English and Welsh should be treated on a basis of equality in the conduct of public business and administration of justice. The Act did not, however, give Welsh the status of an official language. Despite this fact, Welsh does have a presence in the media. On the radio Welsh can be heard on BBC Radio Cymru in addition to local stations. There is no daily Welsh newspaper, but there are dozens of weekly publications and magazines. The television channel S4C, which exists in two forms, has broadcasted Welsh-language programming since 1982. As explained on their website, the analogue S4C provides bilingual programming, with an average of 32 hours of Welsh programming per week, while the digital S4C provides over 80 hours of Welsh programming per week (“About us”). Because S4C receives a portion of its funding from the state, it is under an obligation to broadcast a majority of Welsh language programming during peak viewing hours.

By contrast, Breton receives only a few hours of television programming per week on local channels such as France 3, TV Rennes, and TV Nantes. Breton is heard on the radio through the Breton language station Radio Kerne, which is broadcasted in Finistère, in addition to various local stations that provide more limited Breton programming. Welsh’s stronger presence in the media both contributes to and is a reflection of the legitimization of Welsh in public life. This factor in addition to the
stabilization of the Welsh-speaking population and the strong presence of Welsh in schools all create a more secure position for Welsh than Breton holds in France.

In addition to considering the respective media presences of Welsh and Breton, an interesting parallel may also be drawn between Welsh and French on the subject of existing programming quotas. The requirement that S4C broadcast a majority of Welsh language programming during peak viewing hours brings to mind the quotas set forth by the Conseil supérieur de l’audiovisuel (CSA) for French television and radio programming. The CSA mandates that 40% of French television programming must be of French origin, and at least 60% must be of European origin. The quota for European programming may encompass the quota for French programming, leaving a maximum of 40% of air time to non-European programming. These quotas must be observed during peak viewing hours as well as other times. On the radio, 40% of songs must be in French or a regional language of France.¹ These quotas exist in part to combat the threat of hegemony by non-European music and programming, especially American, and to encourage the production of original French music and television programming.

While the non-official language Welsh has a protected, albeit relatively small, presence in television broadcasting in Wales, it is France’s official language that necessitates similar legislative shelter in the French media. France’s regional languages are addressed in the radio quota, but they are grouped with French rather than given any special status in the face of French. Although French and Welsh are spoken on vastly different scales, it is interesting that they both take protectionist measures against English. While Breton language activists lament the lack of Breton in the media, efforts
by the French state clearly go to the preservation of French in the face of English rather than regional languages in the face of French. This helps illustrate the differing contexts of the regional languages of France and the Celtic languages of the United Kingdom and Ireland, notably how all languages evolve according to their contact with English.

As for the Irish language, its situation is unique among its Celtic counterparts in that it is and has been the subject of extensive language policy of the government of the Republic of Ireland. According to the 2006 census, 1.66 million people aged three and over in the Republic of Ireland speak Irish, which represents 40.8% of the population (29). However, only 3% of the population uses Irish as the main community or household language (Statement on the Irish Language 2006 10). Irish speakers are concentrated in a rural area in the Western periphery of the Republic of Ireland known as the Gaeltacht, which has historically been an Irish-speaking region. The Irish language began its decline during the eighteenth century when English began to spread from urban to rural areas, and the famine of the mid-nineteenth century decreased the Irish-speaking population by millions due to death and emigration. A language revival movement grew in the early twentieth century in tandem with the movement for political independence, and language policy was initiated once independence was achieved.

Since the formation of the independent Irish state in 1922, Irish has been that nation’s first official language, followed by English. Early language strategy goals included the maintenance of Irish in the Gaeltacht, efforts to increase the number of Irish-speakers via the education system, the inclusion of Irish in public service, and standardization and modernization of the Irish language (Ó Riagáin 15). The Irish
language has been standardized, and “Dublin Irish” has been taught in all schools outside
the Gaeltacht since 1958. Jones draws a parallel between this form, known as *Nua Ghaeilge*, and *néo-breton*, as both are artificial varieties that are not always understood
by the native speakers of Irish and Breton dialects (136).

Today Irish is a required area of study in all public schools, and there is also a
system of Irish-medium schooling known as *gaelscoileanna*. Gaelscoileanna refer to
Irish-medium schools outside of the Gaeltacht, which has always maintained Irish-
medium schooling for native Irish speakers. According to the Gaelscoileanna
organization, there are currently 170 Irish-medium primary schools and 42 Irish-medium
secondary schools in Ireland outside of the Gaeltacht with a total enrollment of 35,500
students (“Statistics”). This means that about 7% of students outside of the Gaeltacht are
enrolled in Irish-medium education, a percentage greater than that of students in Breton-
medium education.

Language policy continues in the Republic of Ireland, recently with the passing of
the Official Languages Act of 2003, which works to ensure that public documents are
published in both Irish and English. Irish has a strong presence in the media, including
television and radio stations that broadcast exclusively in Irish in addition to many more
that include some quantity of Irish programming. Similarly, many of the national English
language newspapers include Irish columns or sections. The Irish language is even
required of students attending the National University of Ireland. Jones notes that outside
of the Gaeltacht, learning the new Irish is most appealing to the professional, urban
middle classes due to career opportunities the language opens. In Brittany, it is also
urban classes who are most interested in learning the new Breton, but a marked
difference is that learning Breton does not significantly enhance job expectations in
France (137).

In general, Irish has received a far greater amount of backing from the Irish
government through language policy than Breton has received, which is a function of the
strong cultural heritage associated with Irish and especially its acceptance as an official
language of an independent republic. For example, the 2009 Irish national budget shows
that although the funds allocated to the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht
Affairs was down 4% compared to 2008, there was still a 62% increase in funds allotted
to its subcomponent Ciste na Gaelige for the promotion of the Irish language outside the
Gaeltacht and for the preservation and promotion of traditional Irish music (“Summary of
2009 Budget Measures”).

The situation of Scottish Gaelic in Scotland may share the most similarities with
that of Breton. According to 2001 census results, 1.16% of Scotland’s 5 million residents
speak Gaelic (“Population Profile”). This is a slight decrease from the 1991 census,
whose results were 1.4%. The largest concentration of Gaelic speakers is in the Western
Isles and Highland areas. The retreat of the language was due to many factors spanning
the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, including the British state’s efforts to create
English-language education, break up Scottish clans, and outlaw Highland traditions such
as dress and music (MacKinnon 45). Gaelic was further weakened by legislation passed
in 1872 to create a national English-medium school system. MacKinnon explains that
since the 1970’s there have been considerable efforts to improve the position of Gaelic in
education, the media, and public life, but the language continues to falter in its traditional domains of the family and church (47). The loss of Gaelic in the family parallels the loss of Breton in the family, which both results from and perpetuates the absence of intergenerational transmission.

Gaelic is taught in schools today, both in bilingual settings, as a second language, and through Gaelic-medium education. According to *Comann nam Pàrant*, or the Parents’ Organization for Gaelic-medium education, there are currently over 3,000 students enrolled in Gaelic-medium education, with the majority of students at the primary school level (“Gaelic-Medium Education”). The Scottish Government’s figures state that in 2007, 0.38% of all students were enrolled in either Gaelic-medium or bilingual education (20). This is an even lesser percentage than the number of students in Brittany enrolled in Breton-language education. As in the Breton case, there is difficulty finding adequate numbers of teachers qualified to teach in Gaelic-medium settings.

On the legislative level, one positive step for Gaelic was the passing of the Gaelic Language Act of 2005. The Act established the *Bòrd na Gàidhlig*, a body whose goal is to promote Gaelic language, education, and culture, with the ultimate objective of securing Gaelic as an official language of Scotland. Although the Act itself did not grant Gaelic the status of an official language, the setting forth of a language plan by the Scottish government offered a measure of official recognition.

Hence, Welsh, Irish, and Scottish Gaelic each have a unique situation in their respective homelands, all of which overlap to some extent with Breton’s situation. Commonalities include the retreat of all four of these Celtic languages prior to and during
the twentieth century due to the influence of either English or French. Additionally, immersion schooling has a significant role in the preservation and stabilization of the speaker populations. Welsh’s advantage over its Celtic counterparts is the recent stabilization of the number of Welsh speakers. Irish is the language that has been the longest supported by its own state, an advantage from which Breton does not benefit because of the French state’s policy of French being the only approved language for public life. The movement for the revitalization of Scottish Gaelic seems to parallel that of Breton the most closely, notably in the grassroots efforts to establish immersion schooling and cultural revival.

Regarding these languages’ places within the European Union, Irish is an official language of the EU, while Welsh and Scottish Gaelic are languages protected by the UK’s ratification of the Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Breton does not have the same recognition in the EU due to the French government’s ruling that the Charter is incompatible with the French constitution. Compared to Celtic languages in the UK and Ireland, Breton’s place stands out because of its role as one of many regional languages in a country where the official language of French is closely tied to a unified national identity.

Considering the role of English as the current *lingua franca* and its ever-growing presence in the world today, it seems that Breton may have a doubly difficult challenge in gaining legitimacy compared to Welsh, Irish, and Gaelic. These three regional languages happen to face English directly as the dominant language in their homelands, while Breton faces French, a language that must wage its own battle against English in the
global context. States in which English is the official or predominant language may be more likely to make allowances for regional languages than states for which a main concern is the vitality of its own official language in the face of English. Regional language activists in France might benefit from emphasizing that allowances made for regional languages is a confirmation of France’s linguistic heritage rather than a crack in the linguistic wall that France seems to build against English.

3.4 Regional Languages and the French Constitution

A notable step occurred in July 2008 when an amendment to the French constitution was adopted that recognized the regional languages of France, despite the fact that the French constitution was previously ruled to be incompatible with the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Among other points, the amendment added Article 75-1 to the constitution, which states: “Les langues régionales appartiennent au patrimoine de la France.” Regional languages were not given any particular rights or legitimization; however they were recognized as part of the cultural heritage of France. The amendment was approved by the National Assembly in May, and it was intended that the statement regarding regional languages would be included as a part of Article 1. The Senate did not approve this, however, and it was decided in July that the statement would be added as Article 75-1.

One of the divisive issues was the compatibility of the amendment with Article 2: “La langue de la République est le français.” This article identifies French as the sole official language of France and therefore the only language approved for use in public
life. Those in favor of the new amendment regarding regional languages, such as Assembly deputies Marc Le Fur of the UMP and Patrick Braouezec of the PCF, argued that “l’unité n’est pas l’uniformité!” (qtd. in “L’honneur retrouvé”). In other words, the unity created by the French language does not prohibit the existence of the other languages of France. The unifying power of the French language held an important historical role when many of the inhabitants of France’s various regions spoke a regional language rather than French. The French education system of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries assisted in the spread of the French language, creating a citizenry that spoke a common language and understood the language of the governing bodies. Le Fur and Braouezec’s comment underscores the position that French’s admittedly unifying ability should not imply an elimination of the languages spoken in the French state.

Those against the amendment expressed concerns for the preservation of the French language, such as Senator Jean-Pierre Fourcade of the UMP, who stated, “Nos enfants parlent texto, il faut renforcer le français et ce n’est pas en faisant appel aux langues régionales” (qtd. in “Le Sénat refuse”). This point of view cites the challenges that “proper” French faces in modern society; hence concerns should be for the preservation of French rather than for regional languages. Fourcade mentions the use of new technology, especially by younger generations, and its influence on the language, but other challenges could include influence from English and Arabic in addition to evolutions of the language in an era where various youth cultures include the use of urban slang.
A vocal opponent of the amendment was the *Académie française*, especially the original amendment proposal approved by the National Assembly, which would have recognized regional languages in Article 1. The French Academy made an official declaration on June 12, 2008 voicing their opposition to the amendment. According to the declaration, recognizing regional languages in Article 1, before the French language is mentioned in Article 2, would be illogical and a denial of the principles of the French Republic. It is not surprising that the Academy, whose role is to “veiller à la langue française dans son usage et son rayonnement,” would view this as an attack on the primacy of the French language. The first sentence of the declaration is telling regarding the origin of this type of point of view: “Depuis plus de cinq siècles, la langue française a forgé la France.” For those such as the Academicians, the French language has been an important tool in building the French nation. The recognition of the regional languages in the constitution is considered contrary to what the French Academy has worked for since its creation in the seventeenth century.

Assembly deputy Jean-Luc Warsmann of the UMP, the creator of the amendment, stated that the reason for its inception was to give regional languages a foothold in the constitution, so that later they may gain official protections (qtd. in Rostang). Patrick Hervé, the president of Diwan, expressed his satisfaction at the passing of the amendment, but he stated, “Mais ce n’est que le début d’une législation qui devra être confirmée et permettre ensuite le développement et l’emploi des langues régionales tout en respectant le français. Cet amendement est une condition nécessaire, pas suffisante” (qtd. in “Premier pas”). Hervé likely voices the opinion of many regional activists that
the amendment is only a first step in what the French state could be doing for regional languages.

The eventual passing of the amendment, although ultimately relegated to Article 75-1, does constitute an important step for regional languages in that they were officially recognized in the constitution as part of the cultural heritage of France. Although this is not a radical integration of regional languages into French public life, it does illustrate an evolution in the position of the French state regarding these languages. The amendment is an official acknowledgement that regional languages are in fact a part of France. This is quite different from the point of view many politicians held at the time of the French Revolution and lasting into the twentieth century, which was that regional languages were unfit for French citizens and a detriment to the development of the French nation. More recently, France’s failure to ratify the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages caused disappointment among those fighting for the legitimization of regional languages, but this amendment is an illustration that the French state is neither entirely negligent of its linguistic heritage nor inflexible regarding the issue.

Breton activists will continue to fight for the preservation and recognition of Breton, just as other regional activists will fight for the preservation of Basque, Occitan, or Corsican. Furthering the legitimization of regional languages in public life will likely be difficult due to the fact that France’s official language is so strongly integrated into a sense of national identity and so valued as a part of the cultural heritage. However, there
are recent developments that illustrate an evolution towards greater tolerance for Breton and the other regional languages of France. In the education arena, the affiliation of immersion schools such as the Diwan system with the state as private schools “under contract” and the creation and growth of public and private bilingual schooling are notable examples. In addition, the recent constitutional amendment officially recognizes regional languages as a part of French cultural heritage, which is significant considering that the state once sought to promote the French language at their expense.

Language is often deeply integrated into the culture of the region in which it is spoken and serves as a symbol of its homeland. This is true of Breton in addition to its Celtic counterparts in Wales, Ireland, and Scotland. All of these languages have undergone evolutions due to interaction with an encroaching language, and the current situation of each is dependant on many factors, including the perception of utility by potential speakers, support by the state, and roles in public life and the education system. In the past Breton has faced significant obstacles in all of these arenas, but notable progress has been made in recent years, and supporters of Breton can look to other Celtic languages for support and motivation.

It is clear that any Breton spoken in the future will be the new Breton that is today learned as a second language rather than that of native Breton speakers whose last generation is dying out. If the new Breton is embraced by new groups and integrates itself into modern society, it will possibly shake itself free of the stigma once attached to the old language and its speakers. The societal role and cultural value of the new Breton is vastly different from that of the old dialects; therefore, they could be considered two
different languages. As long as French society views Breton as a remnant of peasant history, the future of the language will remain bleak. If Breton is accepted as a language relevant to modern society in addition to a part of France’s cultural heritage, its increased cultural capital would serve its prospects well.

1 More detailed information regarding programming quotas and corresponding governmental publications may be found on the CSA’s website at <www.csa.fr>.

2 This statistic does not include Northern Ireland. According to Northern Ireland’s 2001 Census, 4.6% of the population speaks, reads, writes, and understands Irish, and an additional 0.4% of the population speaks and reads but does not write Irish. 89.7% of the population has no knowledge of Irish (“Census 2001 Output”).
Chapter 4: A New Minority in France and Political Reaction

In an examination of minority groups and minority identities in France, it would be imprudent to ignore the presence of groups issued from immigration, especially those with North African origins. Much like regional cultures and languages, the cultures and languages of this group are also affected by interactions with the dominant French culture and language. Two elements that offer themselves especially well to this analysis are the Arabic language and Islam and their relations to the French language and the French principle of laïcité. Arabic speakers in France are primarily comprised of immigrants and their descendants, including both French citizens and foreign residents, and speakers of the North African dialect also include North African Jews, harkis, and pieds-noirs (Barontini 6). The Arabic language is very much entwined with complicated chapters in France’s history such as colonialism and the Algerian War in addition to intensely-debated topics in contemporary society such as immigration. The place of Islam in France’s strictly secular society is also a multi-faceted topic, as French laïcité is considered a highly valued characteristic of the Republic that at times seems incompatible with the visible presence of Islam in society.

Obviously all Muslims in France are not Arabic speakers, and all Arabic speakers are not Muslim, much like all regional activists in Brittany are not Breton speakers, and vice versa. However, in both of these contexts, there is a significant correlation between
the two components, and this correlation allows us a framework by which to examine certain aspects of French society and to seek out parallels. An important part of this framework includes the conceptualization of Breton language and culture as historically attached to French territory and Arabic language and Muslim culture as components of French society issued from immigration and colonialism. This opposition plays a primary role in the different conceptions of two groups that face similar challenges as the carriers of minority cultures and languages in France.

The presence in France of languages and cultures issued from immigration has been at the root of escalated debate in France over the past thirty years, and the extreme right has been a vocal participant in those debates. The *Front national* has for several decades held strong anti-immigration stances, and there is now the rise of a new group on the extreme right with perhaps even more radical stances regarding immigration and identity in Europe: *les Identitaires*. This political movement conceptualizes identity in such a way that privileges regional and European identity as equal to French identity and uses this as a basis for an ideology that rejects immigration and multiethnic societies. An examination of this movement is especially fitting to this project because it is a somewhat unique manifestation of regionalism that ultimately uses one type of minority group (regional minorities) as part of a justification for the elimination of another type of minority group (minorities issued from immigration). And these two types of minority groups have more in common regarding their place in French society than appears on the surface.
In this chapter I will give an overview of the presence of the Arabic language and Islam in France. A comparison of Arabic and Breton will illustrate that despite that fact that both are officially labeled *langues de France*, they seem to follow opposing linguistic trajectories. Breton is threatened while Arabic flourishes, even though Breton’s homeland is within the French territory and Arabic is issued from immigration. A comparison of Muslim schools and Diwan will reveal that these alternatives to public schools each search to fulfill gaps created by the education system’s devotion to the French language and *laïcité*. I will examine the political group *les Identitaires* as a reaction to the presence of immigrants who have brought Arabic and Islam into France, demonstrating an incongruity in the logic by which this group favors regional identity but rejects a plural French society.

4.1 Arabic in France

The *Délégation générale à la langue française et aux langues de France* (DGLFLF) identifies France’s non-territorial languages as dialectal Arabic, occidental Armenian, Berber, Judeo-Spanish, Romani, and Yiddish. The non-territorial languages of France are defined as “les langues minoritaires parlées par des citoyens français sur le territoire de la République depuis assez longtemps pour faire partie du patrimoine culturel national, sans être langue officielle d’aucun État,” and are grouped with regional languages under the label “langues de France” (3). The designation of *non-territorial language* came about as France was preparing to ratify the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. The Cerquiglini report of 1999 analyzed the languages
spoken in France and their eligibility for protection under the Charter. Cerquiglini identified seventy-five languages spoken in France other than French, and the languages that were “dépourvues de territoire” fell into their own unique category. Although the ratification of the Charter never took place, this new linguistic category remained and gave this handful of languages an official recognition by the French state.

One might wonder how Arabic can be classified as a language of France given that the definition stipulates that these languages do not have the status of being an official language of any other state. The answer to this question resides partly in the understanding of the diglossic nature of the language; *diglossia* refers to a linguistic context in which two languages or dialects coexist but serve different functions in society. Dialectal Arabic refers to the spoken language that exists in a variety of dialects and is used by speakers in everyday life. This is contrasted to Modern Standard Arabic, which is found in the media and education, is given official status in government, and remains uniform across Northern Africa and the Middle East. There is also Classical Arabic, which is found principally in the Koran. Thus, when I speak of the kinds of Arabic spoken in France and other countries of the European Union by minority groups, I refer to forms of dialectal Arabic, and when I speak of the Arabic studied as a foreign language in the French education system, I refer to Modern Standard Arabic, unless otherwise specified.

Dialectal Arabic is the most widely spoken of the non-territorial languages in France with an estimated three million speakers, most of whom speak the North African dialect (“Langues de France”). However, official statistics are not known regarding the
exact number of Arabic speakers and their dialects because of the ban in France of
statistics regarding individuals’ ethnic origins, race, or religion. The French constitution
does not officially recognize any minority groups, and the state is not permitted to ask
any individual about criteria for which they could be the victims of discrimination. As it
is stated in the French constitution in Article 1, “[La France] assure l’égalité devant la loi
de tous les citoyens sans distinction d’origine, de race ou de religion.”

Arabic enjoys a high rate of retransmission from one generation to the next, at
approximately 65% (Deprez 7). This is not as high as some other non-territorial
languages of France; for example, the retransmission rate of Turkish is the highest at
86%, but only Turkish, Cambodian, and Portuguese rank above Arabic. This
retransmission rate is an indicator that Arabic in France is a language that has personal
and/or practical value to its speakers. Barontini and Caudet have identified certain
familial factors that promote the retransmission of Arabic, such as parents who have an
active interest in passing the language down to their children and the need for some
children to act as intermediaries between their Arabic-speaking parents and French-
speaking society (46-47). However, they also underline the importance of extra-familial
factors that reinforce such retransmission. Because Arabic has gained footing in the
media, especially through film and music, “la société civile semble adhérer tout
naturellement à une forme de valorisation et de familiarisation avec l’arabe maghrébin”
(43). The popularity of films such as L’Esquive and Indigènes and music by artists such
as Zebda and Rachid Taha illustrate the presence that Arabic has in French media and
popular culture.
Further, Barontini and Caudet believe that not only has Arabic become accepted as a part of French culture, but also that Arabic speakers have found a place for themselves in a French society that is now plural:

Si l’arabe maghrébin peut être considéré de facto comme une langue de France, c’est parce qu’il ne s’agit plus pour les locuteurs de cette langue de se situer “entre deux cultures” ou dans un “métissage” culturel, et que l’on peut se référer à un changement au sein même d’une culture française plurielle et séculière. Cette présence de l’arabe maghrébin sur le devant de la scène démontre sa vitalité au sein de la société. L’arabe maghrébin apparaît pour la France comme un patrimoine, une langue ressource, qui n’est pas limité à ses héritiers légitimes, mais qui se donne en partage à tous. (44)

This perspective is telling of an evolution in the perception of the Beur population in France, to which has typically been attributed a sort of identity crisis of being caught between an Arabic-speaking Muslim world of immigrant parents on one hand and a French-speaking secular society on the other. It is possible, however, that Arabic has become so integrated into contemporary French society that these individuals no longer experience a distinct opposition between these two aspects of society. Resistance to the Arabic language in French society does still exist, especially among non-immigrants, but it may be time to move on from the question of whether or not Arabic will be integrated into French society and consider instead the place it already occupies.

4.1a Arabic in schools

The Arabic language does have a presence in the French education system, but that presence is held by Modern Standard Arabic, rather than dialectal Arabic. Dialectal Arabic has never been officially taught in public schools in France, but it was
acknowledged in the education system from 1995-1999 as one of the languages for the optional test of *langues ne faisant pas l’objet d’un enseignement*, or non-taught languages, on the *baccalauréat*. The Ministry of Education did away with dialectal Arabic as one of the languages covered under this test despite the fact that it was by far the most popular of the 28 languages offered under this particular *baccalauréat* testing category; dialectal Arabic constituted 78% of all testing in this category in 1999 (Caubet 175). Caubet speculates that this cut occurred because the high volume of candidates posed a logistical problem for the *Inspection générale d’arabe*; although in the end it was up to Minister of Education Jack Lang, who may have had other political reasons (174).

Thus, although dialectal Arabic is designated as a *langue de France*, it does not have any official presence in the education system; instead Modern Standard Arabic is taught as a foreign language.

Modern Standard Arabic is one of the *langues vivantes étrangères*, or foreign languages, offered in both primary and secondary education. In primary education, Arabic is one of six languages students may study, but a large majority choose English; in 2003-2004 for example, 79.7% of those enrolled in foreign language study chose English against 0.16% for Arabic (Caubet 185). At the primary level there is also language instruction under the umbrella of ELCO (*enseignement des langues et cultures d’origine*), which targets children born in other countries and is funded by each particular country of origin. Interestingly, although these courses are labeled as though the language taught is a dialectal Arabic, such as *arabe algérien* or *arabe tunisien*, the Arabic taught is actually Modern Standard Arabic (Caubet 185).
At the secondary level, students may study Arabic as a first, second, or third foreign language (LV1, LV2, or LV3). The study of Arabic represents 0.17% of all foreign language study, and this figure has remained stable since 2002 (Levallois 7). Levallois identifies obstacles that Arabic faces as a foreign language in France, principally that in contemporary Europe, students are more likely to study other European languages rather than Arabic. Additionally, some school officials fear that the teaching of Arabic will contribute to the exclusion of immigrant students and encourage *communautarisme* (7). *Communautarisme*, or communalism, is a term that implies the forming of closed ethnic groups or the lack of integration of these groups into society. The concept is contrary to French republican values; as Bowen explains, according to these values, “Social mixing (*mixité*) leads people to see each other as fellow citizens rather than as tokens of particular ethnic, racial, or gendered types of person. Social mixing effaces particularistic identities and gives individuals a republican sameness, a social anonymity in the public sphere” (158). These same ideals are at the root of the ban on ethnic statistics in France, as minorities are not recognized by the French state, and division of the French citizenry into minority groups is contrary to republican values.

At the post-secondary level, Arabic is taught in twenty universities, many *grandes écoles*, and institutes such as Inalco (*Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales*), which offers a multitude of varieties of dialectal Arabic. In 2004, the percentage of LLCE (*langues, literatures et cultures étrangères*) and LEA (*langues étrangères appliquées*) students who studied Arabic was 3.5%; Arabic therefore ranked fifth among languages offered (Deheuvels 8). Deheuvels comments that although this
statistic seems modest, “la France [est] le seul pays du monde occidental à enseigner l’arabe et sa civilisation, de l’école primaire à l’université, avec une offre large, poussée, très attractive au niveau européen et international” (8). While this may be true, Caubet reminds us that it is not always easy to locate a school near one’s residence where one’s language of choice is taught (184). Although Arabic does have a presence in the French education system as a foreign language, it has trouble competing with more popular languages such as English and Spanish and is not as widely offered as these languages.

The fact that dialectal Arabic is only offered as a topic of study at the university level is indicative of factors such as the diglossic nature of the Arabic language and its level of acceptance by the national education system in France. On one hand, dialectal Arabic is not studied as an academic subject in Arabic-speaking countries, so its lack of presence in the French education system seems to follow general linguistic parameters within the Arabic language community. Modern Standard Arabic is the universal language needed for communication outside of one’s particular dialect and has a standard written form. On the other hand, if dialectal Arabic is officially recognized as a langue de France, then it would seem that its study would be acceptable within the general academic community and offered for study at more institutions. However, although dialectal Arabic seems to be integrated as a part of contemporary French culture and is more and more accepted by society, the fear of communalism remains considerable, as immigration is still very much at the forefront of political and cultural debate in France.
4.1b Comparison of Breton and Arabic languages\textsuperscript{1}

When Breton and Arabic are considered on a global level, they seem to be languages whose situations are diametrically opposed; for example, while Breton is considered a threatened language spoken by only a few hundred thousand people, dialects of Arabic are spoken by over 200 million people (Lewis). Even within the context of France, the contrasts are easily noted; with an estimated three to four million speakers in France, Arabic is spoken by over ten times the number of people than Breton, and its intergenerational transmission rate of 65% towers over Breton’s, which is near 0%.

However, despite these differences, Arabic and Breton make for a noteworthy comparison as two minority languages existing within the parameters of a state whose attachment to its official language is very strong.

Much like regional languages, Arabic’s official place in French society is dictated primarily by the fact that French is the sole official language of France, as stated in Article 2 of the French constitution: "La langue de la République est le français.”

However, regional languages do benefit from recognition in Article 75-1 of the constitution stating that they are a part of French cultural heritage. Because Arabic was brought to France primarily through immigration, it lacks this type of historical connection to the French culture or territory. Dialectal Arabic and Breton do share the common recognition of being a langue de France, a category that includes both regional languages and non-territorial languages. Interestingly, the subcategories langue régionale and langue non-territoriale underline the fundamental difference between the
two; one is linked to the territory of France through the designation of region while the other is dépouvue de territoire, as it is described in the Cerquiglini report.

Both of these langues de France are taught in the French education system, and both in standardized forms. In the Arabic-speaking world, diglossia is the accepted norm, and this linguistic context has carried over into the French school system; a student may study Modern Standard Arabic, but it is dialectal Arabic that is used in everyday life, primarily the North African dialect in France. Similarly, the Breton that is taught in bilingual schools and the Diwan system is the new standardized form of Breton rather than the naturally-occurring dialects that native speakers once used in Lower Brittany. However, while dialectal Arabic continues to thrive in France despite a very minor presence in the education system, this new Breton is becoming the only form of the language spoken as the last remaining native speakers die out. It is not likely that the context of the Breton language would be described as diglossic, however, because the two forms of the language do not coexist within a linguistic community; rather, those that speak the new Breton are French speakers who have studied it as a second language.

Perhaps the linguistic context of Lower Brittany could have been described as diglossic in the past, when most inhabitants were native speakers of Breton, but the language of the education system, military, and local governments was French. At this time there was a clear divide between the languages in which private and public life were conducted. This same sort of situation is probably true for some of the individuals of the Arabic-speaking community in France; private life is conducted in dialectal Arabic while public life is conducted in French. For some immigrants, it is almost that they have
moved from one form of diglossia to another; the role held by Modern Standard Arabic in government and media in their previous country is now replaced by French. This line becomes more and more blurred, however, as dialectal Arabic gains a larger presence in French society.

Both Arabic and Breton exist as minority languages in a country whose official language is a valued part of its cultural heritage. However, the courses the languages are taking in French society seem to be opposing; while Breton has receded in the face of French, Arabic is gaining ground in its acceptance into French society and as a part of French culture. The intergenerational transmission rates of the two languages speak volumes regarding their perceived utility in French society and the desire of parents to pass the languages onto their children. While Breton must rely on the teaching of its new standardized form for language preservation, the vitality of dialectal Arabic in French society is not dependent on the Modern Standard Arabic taught in the French education system. This is not to say that the study of Modern Standard Arabic as a foreign language does not facilitate the public’s acceptance of the various forms of the language, rather that the standardized forms of Arabic and Breton hold different roles in their respective linguistic contexts.

4.2 Islam in France

Islam has become the second most important religion in France, and it is estimated that there are four million Muslims living in France today, or 6% of the population. Their origins are mostly North African, but this group also includes those
with origins in Sub-Saharan Africa and Turkey. Islam is second only to Catholicism, which remains the declared religion of 65% of the population (Machelon 10). The presence of Islam in France is a complex and oft-debated issue for a multitude of reasons. For example, Islam is associated with immigrant populations and its visibility in French society in the form of mosques and headscarves contributes to what may seem like a stark contrast between traditional French culture and the “foreign” elements of Islam.

Additionally, France has become strictly secularized over the course of the twentieth century, which complicates the acceptance of a religion whose members are much more likely to practice their faith than their Catholic counterparts (Fetzer and Soper 77). The conflict between Islam and French laïcité has come to a head in the last twenty years with the debate over religious signs in public schools, and the recently-opened Muslim schools represent a new chapter in the story of education in France.

The separation of church and state in France was made official by the law of December 9, 1905, which guarantees the free exercise of religion and prevents the state from subsidizing religion. The term laïcité was not included in French legal documentation until the constitution of 1946 and was subsequently reiterated in the constitution of 1958; article 1 states: “La France est une République indivisible, laïque, démocratique et sociale.” The concept of laïcité may be interpreted differently by different people, but Baubérot offers one of the simplest explanations: “laïcité [is] the French term for the formal separation of the state from organized religions” (189). A CSA poll conducted in Paris in 2005 asked individuals what laïcité meant to them, and there were three dominant responses: “de mettre toutes les religions sur un pied
d’égalité,” “de séparer les religions et la politique,” and “d’assurer la liberté de conscience” (Conseil supérieur de l’audiovisuel). Here we see the extension of the concept from the simple separation of church and state to a guarantor of freedom of conscience.

Bowen cites Jacques Chirac’s interpretation of laïcité as expressed in a public address in 2003 as the most pertinent to the discussion of laïcité and Islam. In this speech, Chirac speaks out in favor of a law prohibiting conspicuous signs of religion in public schools. He describes laïcité as a guarantee of a neutral public space in which republican values flourish:

[La laïcité] permet à des femmes et à des hommes venus de tous les horizons, de toutes les cultures, d’être protégés dans leurs croyances par la République et ses institutions. Ouverte et généreuse, elle est le lieu privilégié de la rencontre et de l’échange où chacun se retrouve pour apporter le meilleur à la communauté nationale. C'est la neutralité de l'espace public qui permet la coexistence harmonieuse des différentes religions.

This interpretation of laïcité protects the freedom of conscience but can also be used to argue against anything that threatens the harmonious coexistence of different religions or the neutrality of the public space.

If laïcité is the basis for all republican values, then its applicability in public schools is especially important; Chirac vocalized a long-standing view on the importance of the educational institutions in France: “L’école est un sanctuaire républicain que nous devons défendre. . . .” Laïcité in French schools has a history that dates back to Jules Ferry’s efforts in replacing religious instruction with a civic morality. Its applicability in schools in a French society in which Islam has a significant presence has been highly
debated in recent years. An important turning point regarding the place of Islam in this
sanctuaire républicain came in 2004 with the adoption of a law prohibiting the wearing
of conspicuous religious symbols in public schools. The law states, “Dans les écoles, les
collèges et les lycées publics, le port de signes ou tenues par lesquels les élèves
manifestent ostensiblement une appartenance religieuse est interdit.” These conspicuous
religious signs include headscarves worn by Muslim girls, yarmulkes worn by Jewish
boys, and turbans worn by Sikh boys.

The result of this law is that Muslim girls who wish to wear the headscarf,
regardless of their reasons, are not permitted to do so in public schools. During the 2004-
2005 school year, which immediately followed the institution of the law, the Education
Ministry reported that forty-seven students were expelled because of their refusal to
remove their religious signs, 550 incidents were resolved through dialogue, and ninety-
six had left public school for another instructional option such as a private school or
distance learning (Bowen 151). However, these statistics do not include students who
had decided on an alternative prior to the start of the school year and thus did not show
up to school at all.

Private schooling has become a primary option for Muslim girls who wish to
continue wearing a headscarf to school; some private schools follow the ban on religious
signs and some do not. There are over two million students enrolled in private schools in
France, which constitutes 13.5% of students at the primary level and 21.1% of students at
the secondary level (“Les établissements d’enseignement privés”). Private schools in
France fall under two categories: hors contrat and sous contrat. If a private school is
under contract with the state, it teaches the national curriculum and must be open to students of all faiths. In return, it receives funding from the state in the form of subsidies and the payment of teachers’ salaries.

The vast majority of these schools are Catholic institutions, to which many Muslim students have turned due to the headscarf ban. Official statistics are not kept, but the *New York Times* reported in 2008 that Muslim and Catholic educators estimate that more than 10% of all students enrolled in Catholic schools are Muslim students (Bennhold A6). It is interesting that so many Muslim students opt to attend a school affiliated with a religion different than their own rather than a public school that is governed by the principle of *laïcité*, which guarantees freedom of conscience. Chirac’s conception of *laïcité* as a neutral public space illustrates that although this principle seems on the surface to emphasize equal acceptance of all religions, its core emphasis may actually be on the preservation of public space as an arena free from elements that are not in line with republican values. For example, although the Republic accepts all religions, the 2004 law bans manifestations of these religions that are purported to compromise Republican values, such as the wearing of a headscarf, which signals an inequality between men and women according to supporters of the law.

Some argue that it is not Islam that is not welcome in public schools, but certain cultural traditions associated with Islam that are viewed as incompatible with the Republic. Conversely, others argue that Islam is in fact not welcome in public schools, and the true motive of the law banning religious signs is to keep Islam out of the public education system, all accomplished under the guise of protecting *laïcité*. The former is a
more politically correct way to conceptualize this problem, but the latter is perhaps closer to the truth in a country steeped in Catholic tradition. Regardless, both of these factors likely had a role in the minds of lawmakers and the collective conscience of the French people when this law came into being.

4.2a Muslim Schools

A more recent development in the French educational sphere and an option for Muslim students wishing to wear headscarves is the opening of private Muslim schools. There are 8,871 private schools in France, 97% of which are Catholic (“Les établissements d’enseignement privés”). The remaining three percent includes approximately 250 Jewish schools and now four Muslim schools: two collège-lycées in Aubervilliers and Décines, one lycée in Lille, and one primary school on the island of Réunion (Ministère des affaires étrangères et européennes 2). Although Muslim schools are only a small fraction of private institutions with combined enrollments totaling approximately 500 students, the successful operation of these institutions represents a turning point in the French educational sphere.

Like Catholic schools, these Muslim schools accept students of all faiths, and religious instruction is optional. The Arabic language is offered as a part of the program of study; for example, at the collège-lycée La Réussite in Aubervilliers students are required to study Arabic and English as their LV1 and LV2. The general curriculum of the schools follows that set out by the state. As the vice president of the al-Kindi Association, the group that runs the collège-lycée al-Kindi in Décines, explains:
“L’établissement suit à la lettre le programme imposé par l'Education nationale. Son originalité se trouve dans les enseignements supplémentaires qui y sont dispensés tels que l'atelier d'expression qui initie les élèves à la communication, l'apprentissage de langues orientales et l'enseignement des cultures de l'Islam” (Chergui). The national core curriculum is supplemented by courses pertaining to Muslim tradition, such as the study of Arabic and Islam.

One of the reasons that al-Kindi follows the national curriculum is to qualify eventually for state subsidies as a private school that is sous contrat. Thus far, only the lycée Averroès in Lille has qualified for this designation. Al-Kindi is not eligible yet, however, because it opened in 2007 and the Ministry of Education’s requires a five-year trial period for private schools prior to application for subsidies. The principal advantage of being under contract with the state is the financial support. A main challenge for Muslim schools is how to defray operating costs. At al-Kindi, students pay a tuition of 1,200 euros each year, and the remaining costs are covered by donations from the community (“Rentrée des classes”). The collège-lycée La Réussite has been plagued by financial problems and has issued appeals to the community to elicit donations to help finance its operation and relieve some of its growing debt (“Communiqué aux parents”). These schools hinge their futures on the possibility of receiving subsidies.

Al-Kindi is the largest of the Muslim schools with an enrollment of 343 students. According to the president of the al-Kindi association, Hakim Nazir, the school receives approximately a thousand applications for enrollment each year, but they are unable to accommodate that many students due to operating costs (“Le lycée Al Kindi”). Nazir
also defends the school against the image of “un établissement peu ouvert et squatté par les familles fondamentalistes qui pouvaient scolariser là des jeunes filles portant le voile” (Géraud). He explains that boys constitute 40% of the enrollment, and that girls that choose to wear headscarves are “une courte majorité.” Overcoming stereotypes by the community fueled by fear of communalism is a barrier to Muslim schools’ acceptance by the greater public.

This tendency toward stereotypes is related to the conception of Islam as “other,” which is not wholly surprising given France’s extremely long affiliation with the Catholic church. Bowen highlights the contradiction shown in the state’s toleration of Catholicism versus Islam:

The headscarf and the mosque are not objectively more visible than the nun’s habit and the cathedral, but they are, or were, subjectively shocking because they were new, foreign—or perhaps, as reminders of a bloody, recent, colonial past, not foreign enough. . . . Muslims’ demands to live their religion publicly also made explicit the contradictions already in place between French ideas about religion’s private character and the still-public role of France’s Catholic heritage. (20)

As a result of France’s extensive history with the Catholic church, French culture is steeped in Catholic traditions to the point that it seems incomprehensible that Catholicism may ever be judged contrary to French culture, despite the importance of laïcité today in France. However, Islam’s much more recent influx into France, its associations with past colonial traumas, and current fears of radicalism all make its otherness that much more apparent. As a result, Islam may be perceived as incompatible with une République laïque despite Catholicism having coexisted with laïcité since its inception.
Despite all this, the acquisition of the status *sous contrat* by the lycée Averroès marked a turning point for the French educational sphere and society as a whole in its acknowledgement of Islam and its presence in France. The president of the Averroès association, Amar Lasfar, expressed this sentiment in 2008: “C’est une reconnaissance implicite de l’enseignement privé musulman dans notre pays. On entre dans une nouvelle ère. C’est un pas vers l’intégration du culte musulman en France” (qtd in “Averroès”).

The granting of public funds to subsidize a Muslim school does demonstrate a small step toward achieving the acceptance that has been granted to the Catholic church during the twentieth century. Muslim schools provide just one of several possible frameworks for examining the presence of Islam in France, but it is clear that an evolution is taking place, much like the gradual acceptance of the Arabic language into French culture.

4.2b Comparison of Diwan and Muslim schools

Both Diwan and Muslim schools illustrate an evolution of the French education system that reflects the changing roles of minority groups in French society. Although the basis for the creation of Diwan schools is linguistic immersion and that of Muslim schools is the teaching of the tenets of Islam, both can be said to fulfill the desires of particular minorities that cannot be satisfied by the public school system. Each of these types of institutions is a reaction against an element of French culture that is highly valued as an integral part of contemporary French society and something that carries symbolic importance in France’s struggles throughout history to become what it is today. These two elements are the French language and French *laïcité*. 
Diwan offers an alternative linguistic possibility in the educational sphere in an effort to revitalize a language that has receded in the face of the French language’s hegemony. Diwan’s emphasis on Breton’s immersion is unacceptable to a public school system in which the French language is given highest priority as the language of the Republic. In the same way, Muslim schools offer an alternative learning environment that tolerates, if not encourages, religious expression that is unacceptable because of the carefully defended principle of laïcité of the public schools. It is clear that the separation of church and state and the creation of a neutral public space accepting of all religions is a cornerstone of republican values and helped France build an ideological basis following its break with the Catholic church. Nonetheless, the wearing of religious signs is unacceptable to a public school system in which laïcité is highly privileged as the basis for republican values.

An examination of alternatives to public education in France provides a framework by which to consider the strengths and shortcomings of a system that has historically taken on the role of forming French citizens. The role of the education system in shaping the French nation has clearly changed over the last century. Since the time when education was taken over by the state and away from church authority, it has served as a tool for integration. A century ago, this was primarily the integration of regional minorities into the public life of a larger Republic. Now that this integration is largely accomplished and monolingual speakers of regional languages are virtually nonexistent, today any integrating qualities of public schools are geared towards immigrant populations. However, with the ban on religious signs in public schools, the
question now is, do public schools still serve as the great tools of integration they once did? Yes, the ban on religious signs requires students to give up certain displays of culture or faith, an act which is itself a step toward integration as an acknowledgement or acceptance of the French value of laïcité and the neutrality of French public space. However, if French schools exclude students wishing to wear religious signs, how can it reach out to this group of students in order to achieve the level of integration desired? It could be argued that this exclusion brings upon the opposite of the desired effect: possible isolation and communalism.

Much like the argument that the ban on regional languages in public schools elicited feelings of persecution and a subsequent desire for la revendication régionale, it could be argued that the ban on religious signs elicits feelings of discrimination and a corresponding desire to assert one’s right to wear such signs. Both Diwan and Muslim schools are the result of attempts to reclaim a sort of legitimacy in one particular domain: the education system. It is possible that these two types of minority groups that seem to share little in common actually follow similar trajectories in their search for a place in French society.

4.3 Immigration and French National Identity

The challenges that Islam and the Arabic language have faced in finding a place in French society are due in part to their foreign roots and their seemingly stark contrast to traditional French culture. It was primarily through immigration that these cultural elements have found their way into France. According to figures published by INSEE in
2006, there are over 5 million immigrants in France, or 8% of the total population, 30% of which originate from North Africa ("Les immigrés"). Immigration has played a significant role in France’s history since at least the early twentieth century, when immigrants from European countries such as Italy, Spain, and Poland arrived in France to bolster the workforce. The 1950’s and 1960’s witnessed new groups of immigrants from North and Sub-Saharan Africa following decolonization and the Algerian War, as France was again in need of workers during the economic growth of les Trente Glorieuses. It was not until 1974 that stricter regulations concerning immigration were instituted, and after this time, immigration was granted primarily for familial or political reasons. Since 1974, immigrants from North Africa have outnumbered those of European origin ("Les immigrés").

The integration of immigrants into French society, especially non-European immigrants, has become a significant topic of discussion in France in conjunction with the question of national identity. The French government has demonstrated this by the formation of the Ministère de l’immigration, de l’intégration, de l’identité nationale et du développement solidaire in 2007, which brings together the various issues associated with immigration under one Ministry. The Ministry’s objectives are: “maîtriser les flux migratoires, encourager le codéveloppement, favoriser l’intégration et promouvoir notre identité.” Its mission statement addresses the bringing together of these various factors of immigration, integration, and national identity:

La promotion de notre identité est une réponse aux communautarismes et vise à préserver l’équilibre de notre Nation. L’immigration, l’intégration et l’identité nationale sont complémentaires. . . . C’est parce que la France a
According to this explanation, the Republic views immigration, integration, and national identity as interrelated concepts. National identity is presented as a counterbalance to communalism; the Republic can be welcoming of immigrants, but in turn they must respect its values. It is clear that immigration and the question of how to reconcile the existence of immigrants in France have become inseparable from French identity.

However, the creation of the Ministry was not without protest, notably by intellectuals such as historians and university professors, who in one 2007 petition argued against the association of immigration with the question of national identity: “De notre point de vue, l’identité nationale constitue, aujourd’hui, une synthèse du pluralisme et de la diversité des populations et ne saurait être fixée dans le périmètre d’un ministère” (qtd in “Nous protestons”). They feared that the Ministry was not supportive of a pluralistic view of society and would only serve to exacerbate negative preconceptions regarding immigration. A 2009 petition calling for the eradication of the Ministry cited the risks of exclusion for immigrants: “Réfugiés et migrants, notamment originaires de Méditerranée et d’Afrique, et leurs descendants, sont séparés d’un ‘nous’ national pas seulement imaginaire puisque ses frontières se redessinent sur les plans matériel, administratif et idéologique” (qtd in “Nous exigeons”). Here the fear is that the Ministry would only serve to institutionalize the separation between non-European immigrants and the rest of French society. What the government sees as a logical administrative solution to these complex issues is for others an act that problematizes and exacerbates the friction caused
by evolutions of French national identity in what should be considered a pluralistic society.

4.4 Immigration, National Identity, and Politics

Clearly France’s current administration, under the leadership of Sarkozy, has identified immigration and national identity as a significant issue to be addressed. While not everyone agrees with Sarkozy’s actions, his affiliation with the center-right UMP (Union pour un Mouvement Populaire) indicates a relatively moderate view on immigration when compared with groups on the extreme right. The presence of Arabic-speaking and Muslim populations in France has triggered a reaction on the extreme right that has crystallized anti-immigration platforms and discourses ranging from the nationalism of the Front national (FN) to a rejection of European plural societies by groups such as the Identitaires.

The most mainstream of the extreme right groups in France is the FN, which was founded in 1972 and is at the root of much of the reactionary sentiment regarding immigration in the political arena. The Front national (FN) seized upon the issue of immigration in tandem with the escalation of crime and the growing unemployment problem. The FN has grown steadily over the past thirty years and revolves around the charisma of Jean-Marie Le Pen, who advocates the core values of the FN, which include nation, family, religion, and hierarchy. His conception of France generates not only anti-immigration discourse but social anti-heterogeneity in general. The FN drew votes from a significantly wider social and geographic range throughout the 1980’s and 1990’s. The
FN suffered a schism in 1998 when Bruno Mégret, who was then the vice-president of the party, split off and formed his own political party, the *Mouvement national républicain*. Although the extreme right was weakened by this split, Le Pen’s advancement to the second round of the presidential elections in 2002 marked a surprising culmination of electoral power for the FN.

The presence of the FN in France today should not be discounted, as its support represents a fairly widespread discontent among voters; however, a more recently emerging and in many ways more radical political movement has entered the European political scene in the last decade: *les Identitaires*. This movement offers an interesting case study not only for its interpretation of identity which rejects plural societies, but also for its privileging of regional identity as part of the basis for such a rejection. It brings together various components of this project in an interesting way: the Identitaires seize upon regional identity in a way that is far more reflective of the new right in the early twentieth century than the more recent leftist grassroots manifestations of political regionalism, and the primary goals of such an ideology seem to be the rejection of Islam and immigration in general in favor of a Europe comprised of monoethnic groups.

The Identitaire movement has been developing in Europe since the end of the twentieth century. Identitaire political groups include *Vlaams Belang* (Flemish Interest) in Flanders, the *Lega Nord* (League of the North) of Italy, *Plataforma per Catalunya* (Platform for Catalonia) in Spain, and the *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* (Liberal Party of Austria). In France, the movement has manifested itself as the *Bloc Identitaire* (BI), a national organization founded in 2003 and converted into a political party in 2009, and its
counterpart *Les Identitaires*, which carries out a “travail de formation et d’animation intellectuelles” (“Structure du Bloc Identitaire”). Related regional political parties in France include *Alsace d’Abord* (Alsace First) of Alsace, which has been in existence since 1989, and *Nissa Rebela*, based in Nice and formed in 2005.²

According to the president of the BI, the party has two thousand members (“Le mouvement d’extrême droite”), which is much smaller than the FN. The FN claims to have seventy-five thousand members (“Les adhérents”), but others estimate membership at twenty thousand (Raffin). The first elections in France after the conversion of the BI into a political party were the regional elections of 2010. The BI was represented on the political ballot in three regions: Languedoc-Roussillon as the *Ligue du Midi*, Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur as the *Ligue du Sud*, and Alsace as *Alsace d’Abord*. The percentage of votes earned was 0.7%, 2.7%, and 4.98% respectively (“Résultats électoraux en France”). In those same regions, the FN earned 12.7%, 20.3%, and 13.5% respectively. Thus the BI lacks the type of support that the FN has and does not compete with France’s main political parties, but it does have a minor electoral presence.

The Identitaires believe that the defense of ethnic and cultural identity is of primary importance: “Être identitaire, c’est défendre en toute circonstance…l’identité ethnique et culturelle dont nous sommes les détenteurs. C’est se conduire en Européen et s’opposer à tout ce qui peut attenter à cette identité” (Les Identitaires 4). The threats against which one’s identity must be protected include immigration and the Islamization and Americanization of Europe. The Identitaires view identity as existing on three complimentary levels: “l’identité charnelle (régionale), l’identité historique (française) et
l’identité civilisationnelle (européenne)” (4). They believe that the local, national, and supranational contexts are all components of one’s distinctiveness.

In speaking about regional identity, Identitaire literature often uses the word *enraciné*, or rooted, which immediately brings to mind the ideology of Maurice Barrès, one of the first to merge regionalism with rightist political thought at the turn of the twentieth century.³ The use of the term *charnel* to describe regional identity implies a physical or bodily link to one’s region of origin: “L’engagement identitaire naît de l’enracinement et donc de l’idée que nous sommes le fruit d’une terre et d’un lignage, le maillon d’une chaîne” (Les Identitaires 4). This notion of rootedness to one’s local region through ancestry falls directly in line with Barrès’ concept of *la terre et les morts*. Barrès believed that an individual’s rootedness to his local region through ancestry and cultural heritage was a fundamental aspect of French nationality. In fact, the BI website mentions Barrès’s name directly in explaining its *ligne politique*:

Face à un discours jacobin ultra-républicain et assimilationniste, nous défendons une vision de l’homme enracinée dans ses communautés naturelles et historiques. La notion de citoyenneté républicaine désincarnée – et sans relation avec la filiation – est en opposition totale avec notre vision de l’identité charnelle et enracinée. Au concept de “France des lumières,” nous opposons celui de la terre et des morts de Barrès. (“Ligne politique du Bloc Identitaire”)

For the Identitaires, assimilation destroys people’s natural identities and does not respect ancestry. “L’identité charnelle” also implies that those born outside of a particular territory cannot or should not be integrated into its culture.

Identitaire ideology does not coincide completely with that of Barrès. For example, Barrès believed that regional identity was the basis for one’s nationality, and he
was ultimately a French nationalist. The Identitaires openly declare that they are not nationalists: “Au nationalisme, idéologie de la nation, nous préférons le patriotisme, attachement charnel à notre terre” (Luyt). This interpretation of the term patriotism is applicable to the three levels of identity, as one’s territory has simultaneously a European, French, and local affiliation. The Identitaires are also in support of “la France des régions dans l’Europe des peuples” (Les Identitaires 16). Thus one’s regional identity is not necessarily a vehicle for one’s French nationality as Barrès advocated, but a vehicle for an attachment to one’s locality by which one is incorporated into natural groupings that coexist with other such natural groupings on a supranational level.

A “France of regions” or “Europe of peoples” is something commonly supported by local regionalist political parties with autonomist platforms, such as the Union démocratique bretonne (UDB) of Brittany or the Partit Occitan in the south of France. However, these local parties do not support that type of structure in an exclusionary way like the Identitaires, but rather as an ideal of regional autonomy. Another example of an issue for which regionalist political parties commonly lobby and which is also supported by the Identitaires is the suppression of departments and the reunification of historical provinces that have been separated by modern regional boundaries, such as Normandy. Departments are viewed as artificial divisions of natural lands and tools of a centralized Republic. The Identitaires also support the teaching of regional languages, which is a fundamental issue for autonomist regionalist groups, but they do specify that their support is limited to “langues historiques de l’Europe” (Les Identitaires 7), excluding Arabic from any possible inclusion in that category. They also specify that regional
languages should be taught in conjunction with the French language; so they would not support immersion schooling such as the Diwan in Brittany.

Although there does seem to be some crossover between the Identitaire platform and leftist autonomist political parties, the Identitaires also apply the concepts of regional identity and rootedness in ways that are more characteristic of the extreme right. Their views on immigration are a prime example. The Identitaires are opposed to immigration, proposing immediate deportation of any illegal immigrants and gradual repatriation of current immigrants in France. They state that immigration is incompatible with an identity based on rootedness: “Nous voulons en effet que l’immigration redevienne un phénomène marginal. Ce qui passe par l’exaltation des vertus de l’enracinement . . . l’immigration, c’est d’abord une émigration, donc un déracinement” (Les Identitaires 10). One who does not have an ancestral connection to a land should not have the right to live on that land. As they explain, “L’identité, c’est quelque chose qui s’hérite” (11). This emphasis on rootedness and ancestry to illustrate an opposition to immigration clearly demonstrates the rejection of multiethnic and multicultural communities.

While Barrès applied the term déracinés to the Jews, as they did not fit into his racial and ethnic conception of the French nation, the Identitaires have simply modernized the term in applying it to immigrants, which they view as one of the threats to Europe today. However, there is some language in Identitaire literature that echoes traditional anti-Semitic tones. For example, in addressing whether or not the Identitaires support capitalism, they state: “nous ne pensons pas que le capitalisme actuel – capitalisme financier de la spéculation et de l’usure, des délocalisations et du dumping
social – soit la réponse adaptée à l’utopie collectiviste” (Les Identitaires 12). While I cannot say that this political movement promotes anti-Semitism, the terms *spéculer* and *usure* are terms that have longtime been associated in the public’s mind with a negative portrayal of European Jews as a group that is not connected to the land through “productive” work, but which migrates and lends money at high rates of interest. Thus it is possible to imagine the Identitaires’ notion of unrootedness applied to Jews under the blanket term *immigrants* if it were applied in a historical context.

An anti-immigration stance is not unique to the Identitaires; it is shared on the extreme right by other groups, most notably the FN, for whom immigration has been a main concern for decades. In the *programme du gouvernement* for Le Pen’s 2007 presidential campaign, immigration is the first of twenty-five issues addressed. It is stated that France’s immigration policy of the last thirty years is “À l’origine de la plupart des maux dont souffre notre pays” (Le Pen président 2007 5). For example, immigrants take available jobs that should be held by Frenchmen and exhaust public resources and governmental aid at the expense of “true” French citizens. The FN’s proposed anti-immigration measures also include withdrawal from the Schengen Area, opposing all treaties that transfer immigration and visa authority to the European Union. This proposal to strengthen French boundaries is an illustration of the FN’s privileging of national identity above all else.

Similar to the Identitaires, the FN supports a zero tolerance policy on illegal immigration; however, the FN does state a tolerance for immigrants who assimilate completely into French society by accepting all French laws and customs. The
Identitaires specifically reject this policy, explaining with this example: “il manquera toujours [à un Maghrébin vivant en France] deux des trois composantes de notre identité, la charnelle et la civilisationnelle: il ne sera jamais alsacien (ou breton, ou corse, etc.) pas plus qu’il ne sera européen” (Les Identitaires 5). This illustrates a fundamental divergence in FN and Identitaire ideology that stems from differing interpretations of identity and how they should be best protected; because the Identitaires view regional, national, and European identity as equal parts of a whole, a mere acceptance of French society and culture by an immigrant would always be incomplete. An acquired citizenship cannot substitute for the natural rootedness necessary for true belonging to the European continent or ancestral ties to a local region.

Another aspect of Identitaire ideology common to the extreme right and directly related to immigration is the perception of Islam as one of the principal threats to European identity. The Identitaires claim to respect Islam as a world religion; they are simply against the proliferation of Islam on European soil: “l’Islam comporte de nombreux éléments en contradiction profonde avec notre culture et notre tradition. C’est pourquoi nous nous opposons fermement aux exigences de plus en plus virulentes de l’Islam sur les terres européennes” (Les Identitaires 10). These exigences include the building of mosques, special treatment for women in public contexts such as hospitals and pools, and the elimination of pork from school meals. The Identitaires believe that Islam cannot be a part of European identity because it is not indigenous to Europe.

The Identitaires’ list of threats to European identity also includes le complexe antiraciste ou ethnomasochiste, which is explained as the hatred of one’s own people.
This results in “l’uniformisation par la promotion du métissage alors que le vrai respect des différences est de reconnaître à chacun sa singularité sans vouloir l’altérer” (Les Identitaires 8). Although they are opposed to multicultural and multiracial societies, the Identitaires claim that they are not racist; they believe that true racism is the blending of cultures and ethnicities that destroys “la richesse de notre planète” (9). The opposition to immigration, the proliferation of Islam on European soil, and the blending of cultures and ethnicities define a political group that has used the concept of identity to simultaneously promote ties to one’s regional culture and promote a Europe that would be free from non-European influences.

One particularly notorious action taken by groups affiliated with the Identitaires is the distribution of soupe identitaire or soupe au cochon. This soupe populaire is distributed as a public service to the underprivileged; however, because the soup contains pork, it specifically precludes individuals who do not consume pork for religious reasons, principally Muslims and Jews. The BI first held a soup distribution in 2004 in Paris, and Identitaire groups throughout France make this a regular practice (Mestre). The offering of soupe au cochon is a demonstration of the Identitaires’ support for la préférence nationale, or national preference, which is the belief that those of French or European origin should be the primary beneficiaries of public assistance, housing, and jobs. Following a soup distribution in Strasbourg in 2006, Robert Spieler, the president of Alsace d’Abord at the time, was quoted as saying: “le cochon est un symbole européen, que cela plaise ou déplaise” (“Une soupe au cochon interdite”). The association of the pig with Europe is also reflected in the Identitaires’ symbol, the wild boar. Boars are a
species indigenous to the European continent, which is reflective of the Identitaire belief in ancestral connection to territory.

It is safe to conclude that the Identitaires’ conception of European identity is racially motivated. As stated in the BI’s charter, “Nous sommes fiers de notre civilisation européenne et, de la même manière que l’on considère l’Afrique comme le ‘continent noir’, revendiquons sans ambiguïté notre appartenance au continent blanc” (Qui sont les Identitaires? 5). In fact, the BI launched the Conseil représentatif des associations blanches (CRAB) in 2005 in conjunction with the cultural and political group Terre et peuple. The council’s goal is to fight discrimination against whites and is a response to the existence of CRAN (Conseil représentatif des associations noires de France) and CRIF (Conseil représentatif des institutions juives de France). However, the Identitaires deny promoting racism of any sort: “les Identitaires ne méprisent ni ne détestent aucun peuple ni aucune culture. Notre slogan ‘100% identité, 0% racisme’ résume notre position” (Les Identitaires 9). They emphasize that each culture and ethnicity should be allowed to flourish, but in their own lands, so as not to create multicultural societies that lack roots.

The cultural and political group Terre et peuple, the cofounder of CRAB, has aligned itself with the Identitaires in recent years; a brief discussion of its ideological underpinnings and those of the related group GRECE may help shed some light on the Identitaire movement. Terre et peuple was founded in 1995 by Pierre Vial, who was also one of the founders of GRECE in 1968. GRECE (Groupement de recherche et d'études pour la civilisation européenne) is an intellectual group that is also known in the political
world as the *Nouvelle droite* (ND).\(^4\) GRECE’s primary vision was a federalist Europe free from foreign influences and composed of its “natural” ethnic groups. It embraced Europe’s hierarchical Indo-European heritage and rejected Americanization and capitalism, which were believed to contribute to the erosion of cultural differences in the world. Alain de Benoist, a leader of the ND, wrote in 1980 that in the face of these threats, “nous ne voyons de raisons d’espérer que dans l’affirmation de singularités collectives, la réappropriation spirituelle des héritages, la claire conscience des racines et des spécificités culturelles” (qtd in Taguieff 93). Once again the notion of roots is used as the basis for an argument against pluralistic societies.

Vial’s current group, *Terre et peuple*, also privileges what it refers to as *patries charnelles* as the authentic territories of France. Vial has written a series of articles available on the *Terre et peuple* website that emphasize pre-Christian roots for various regions of France, for example: “Bretagne, la mémoire celtique” and “La Provence: le leg des Grecs, des Celto-Ligures et de Rome.” In these writings, he lauds the mythical roots of these regions as essential to France’s heritage and identity (“Patries charnelles”). An important comment that should be made regarding the term *patries charnelles* is its traceability to the writer Saint-Loup, who was a supporter of the Waffen-SS and conceived of *patries charnelles* in terms of the geopolitical conception of Europe idealized by the Nazis. Thus the term *charnel* as used by *Terre et Peuple* and the Identitaires carries very controversial connotations which may not be apparent in general Identitaire ideology.
Much like the Identitaires do today, the ND denied promoting any sort of racism, under the pretext that true racism was the erasing of cultural differences rather than the preservation of these differences. Similarly, at the core of GRECE’s ideology was le droit à la différence, or the right to difference, that promoted not only the differences between cultural groups, but also the need for their separation. In Pierre-André Taguieff’s analysis of the ND, he argues that what the ND considers to be anti-racisme differentialiste is actually a form of néo-racism différentialiste et culturel, explaining: “Dans l’ère post-nazie, le racisme s’est recomposé autour de l’éloge de la différence culturelle, du culte des racines et des identités groupales, sans référence à une vision biologisante de la ‘race’” (viii). The parameters of racism had changed, allowing groups such as the ND to promote ideas that seemed imbued with racism while at the same time denying that they were racist.

Political specialist Jean-Yves Camus makes a similar assessment regarding racism and new movements such as the Identitaires, taking into consideration today’s global climate:

Depuis le 11 septembre 2001, le racisme hiérarchisant a laissé place à un racisme culturaliste qui tient plutôt à la théorie du choc des civilisations. C’est pour cela qu’il existe une nouvelle génération de partis populistes qui sont beaucoup plus focalisés sur l’islam, sur son expression politique, et sur son incompatibilité supposée avec les valeurs qui sont censées fonder l’espace européen. (qtd in Mestre and Monnot)

This cultural racism, which is at the root of the rejection of Islam, seems to be a mere variation of GRECE’s droit à la différence. Camus identifies September 11th as a turning point in the conception of Islam and its relation, or lack thereof, to European values.

Although the scope of this discussion is limited to the manifestation of the Identitaires
and related groups in France, clearly the French context does not exist as an isolated bubble separated from broader Europe and the world.

Immigration has introduced various peoples and their cultures and languages into France, and the largest recent wave of immigration issuing from North Africa has brought the Arabic language and Islam. These two elements stand out as contrasts to the French language and a Catholic-turned-secular society. The Arabic language has a significant presence in France, both as the dialectal Arabic spoken by individuals in their everyday life and as Modern Standard Arabic taught in the education system. It could be argued that dialectal Arabic has slowly become integrated into the French culture, as evidenced by its presence in the media and the lives of so many Frenchmen. Additionally, its status as a *langue de France* places it in similar standing with regional languages such as Breton, although the trajectory of Arabic and Breton in France seem to be contrasting. While Arabic has a significant presence in both its high and low dialects, native Breton has virtually died out, leaving standardized Breton as the last vestige of the language.

Islam in France has struggled to find a place, namely due to the importance placed on *laïcité* as a fundamental value of the Republic. While debates regarding *laïcité* once centered on the appropriateness of subsidizing Catholic schools with state funds, it then became essential in the decision of whether religious signs are appropriate in public schools, and now it could be applied to the issue of subsidizing Muslim schools with state funds. Muslim schools represent a new chapter for the educational sphere in France, as
there are currently four private Muslim schools, one of which has qualified for state subsidies. Much like Diwan schools have been a reaction to the hegemony of the French language in the educational system, Muslim schools have been a reaction to the strict interpretation of *laïcité* in the educational system. Both represent responses to needs that the French education system does not meet.

The presence of these cultural elements in France also brings to the fore the effects that immigration has had on contemporary French society and its impact on national identity. The current administration has created a Ministry uniting immigration, national identity, and integration together under one umbrella. More radical actions are proposed by the extreme right, such as the emerging political movement *les Identitaires*. The Identitaires have interpreted regional, national, and supranational identity in such a way that rejects plural societies as threats to ethnic and cultural identities. The party has latched onto the concept of identity in order to fight the presence of foreign elements on European soil.

It is interesting that the Identitaires use regional identity, which was once perceived as a threat to the French Republic, in the fight against Islam and globalization, which are now the perceived threats to European identity. Regional identity is called upon as an indicator of a “true” connection to France in order to exclude non-Europeans and their cultures. This interpretation of the *charnel* has allowed the Identitaires to reject a pluralist French society while conveniently overlooking the fact that France was for centuries a plural society due to these very regional cultures. The use of one type of minority group to justify the elimination of another type of minority group is a strategy
that only thinly veils the cultural racism resulting from a fear of non-European influences in France.

1 The Hebrew language would offer an interesting additional comparison with both Arabic and Breton, although the details of such a discussion are not within the scope of this project. Hebrew exists in two primary forms, Classical Hebrew and Modern Hebrew. Modern Hebrew did not come into existence until the late nineteenth century, when Classical Hebrew, a dead language, was revived as a part of the Zionist movement. Today Modern Hebrew is one of the official languages of Israel and is spoken on an everyday basis by millions of people. Hebrew is an example of the complete revival of a language in a new form, which may offer hope to language activists of Brittany. For a comparison of Modern Hebrew and Modern Standard Arabic, see Blau.

2 “Nissa” stands for Nice Identité Sécurité Solidarité Action.

3 For a more detailed discussion of Barrès’ ideology, see chapter 1.

4 This political group called the Nouvelle droite should not be confused with the new right or nouvelle droite, a term that describes the right that emerged during the 1880’s and 1890’s in France. See chapter 1 for a discussion of the new right.
Conclusion

The preceding chapters have examined regionalism in France through a discussion of early political views of regional languages and cultures, the formation of regional consciousness, and current efforts for regional language revival, narrowing the scope to Brittany whenever possible. Additionally, parallels have been drawn between this regional minority group and a newer type of minority group in France: Arabs, primarily those with North African origins and their descendants. The discussion concluded with an examination of an emerging political movement which addresses both these types of minority groups, favoring regional identity but rejecting the presence of ethnic minorities on French soil.

The flow of topics has been structured as a progression that has ultimately led back to a place that resembles the point of departure. The same questions that were being asked in France in the late nineteenth century are being asked today: who makes up the varied populace that lives within the borders of France and what is the best way to manage it according to the principles of the Republic? Where is the line between the formation of French citizens and the tolerance of alternative cultures that seem to stand in the way of a perfect realization of republican values? What are the reactions of minority groups in France in response to challenges faced in asserting their presence in a Republic that does not officially recognize minority groups? How do the peoples of France today
fit into a vision of France’s future? These questions apply to the Fifth Republic as well as they did to the Third Republic.

An examination of the context of Brittany has allowed for a detailed discussion of factors contributing to the formation of regional consciousness and its manifestation in regional activism. Not only did this afford the opportunity to analyze a particular minority group and some of the underlying factors of its ideology, but it has also been revealing of some of the structures and values of the French state that seem to be the targets of such revendication régionale. A critical examination of the bande dessinée Bécassine reveals some of the regional stereotypes that have formed during the last two centuries, and its popularity is indicative of the acceptance of these stereotypes by the broader public and their incorporation into the national psyche. Stereotyping constructs a reductionist other such as Bécassine who stands out from the rest of the French characters. Regional activists would eventually react against these stereotypes and condemn Bécassine as an over-simplified and derogatory caricature of an entire group of people.

The cultural renaissance in Brittany is also an impetus for and manifestation of regional consciousness. An analysis of the music and writings of Alan Stivell has demonstrated that Breton culture is rooted in Celtic tradition but also has the ability to evolve. Stivell’s work falls under the genre of World Music, demonstrating a hybridity not only on the musical level, incorporating both traditional and modern elements, but a global view on the ideological level as well. The ideology surrounding the Breton cultural renaissance is wider than the borders of Brittany and reaches out into the world.
in solidarity with other peoples, Celtic or otherwise, looking to assert the legitimacy of their languages and cultures. The existence of the *emsav* is a reminder that France is not as homogenous as some claim it to be, and despite the dominance of French language and culture that originates from the center, this dominance has not gone undisputed.

One notable component of regional activism in France is language activism, and language provides a useful framework by which minority groups in France may be examined. Because the French language is the sole official language of France, technically all other languages could be considered minority languages on French soil. A discussion of the presence of these languages in France demonstrates the crucial role the French language plays as a symbol of French culture and a living part of French identity. Some contemporary regional activists argue that regional languages such as Breton were the chosen victims of eradication by the French state; however, the larger context reveals that as the French language spread throughout the Hexagon, regional languages gradually lost their utility. Despite a historical tie to French territory, only recently have regional languages been officially recognized by the French constitution as a part of French cultural heritage. Considering the global context, the French language’s main threat comes from the hegemony of English. Language activists should emphasize that making concessions for regional languages does not take away from the vitality of the French language, but reaffirms France’s linguistic distinctiveness in the face of English.

The Breton language today is an especially dire example of a threatened language, and its status in media and education in France is markedly less than that of the other Celtic languages across the Channel in the United Kingdom and Ireland. Still, although
native dialects of Breton have virtually died out, a new standardized Breton is now being taught as a second language. This is a sign of the high symbolic value of Breton to language activists and defenders of Breton culture. Because the old Breton is essentially extinct, with its strong ties to past ways of life, the future of the Breton language lies in the teaching of the new form and its acceptance into modern society as a language with some sort of cultural capital.

The Arabic language provides an interesting comparison to Breton, as both minority languages are designated as langues de France. However, while Breton holds historical ties to the French territory and may benefit from more official recognition by the constitution, dialectal Arabic, which is rooted primarily in immigration, benefits from a higher level of vitality in French society. Dialectal Arabic is much more widely spoken than Breton, and Modern Standard Arabic has a respectable presence as a foreign language studied in schools. For centuries the French language has been used to help build a French nation and culture. Much as the arrival of French into Brittany fundamentally affected the linguistic landscape of the region, the arrival of Arabic in France and its gradual penetration into society and culture may be fundamentally changing the linguistic landscape of France. It is likely that France, which has worked so hard to establish the supremacy of the French language, is now on a path to becoming a plurilingual community.

A recurrent theme throughout this project has been the role of the French public education system in the upholding of republican values and in the policing of France’s linguistic parameters. Public schools have reinforced the primacy of the French language
in both its symbolic and practical capacities to unite a nation. Jules Ferry revolutionized education by taking its control away from the church and making it secular, free of charge, and required for all children. Creating proper young French citizens was accomplished through the replacing of religious education with a civic morality and the designation of French as the *de facto* language of instruction. These two changes would have lasting effects on the French populace. The church’s authority over education was broken, and *laïcité* became a fundamental characteristic of public education. In addition, regional languages faced a concrete blow to their already-waning legitimacy in French public life. Regional language-speakers now faced the French language at an early age, and the exposure to French in school altered the linguistic course of many families.

The creation of alternative forms of education in France is an indicator of how the needs or desires of some groups are not or cannot be met by public education. New types of schools such as Diwan and Muslim schools are the results of attempts by minority groups to find a niche in which these desires may be accommodated. The hegemony of the French language in public schools has been attacked by some regional activists who claim that it was a driving force in the eradication of regional languages. Efforts to reintroduce regional languages back into education have resulted in immersion schools like Diwan, which have in turn pressured the state into creating bilingual education. Bilingual education represents a compromise by which the state recognizes Breton as a legitimate language to be taught, but it cannot be given higher priority than the French language. Diwan schools are so unique because they succeed as immersion schools in the instruction of Breton, but students also go on to succeed in French at the secondary
level. Diwan hold a significant symbolic value for language activists, as schooling is one of the only means by which Breton is being passed down to the younger generations.

An interesting counterpoint to the Diwan system, Muslim schools represent another alternative form of education, this time in response to the strict *laïcité* of the public education system. Although private Catholic and Jewish schools have existed as an alternative to public education for decades, the advent of Muslim schools represents a turning point for the advancement made by Islam in French society. Because French culture is steeped in Catholic tradition, it is more difficult to reconcile Islam and its high visibility with French *laïcité*. Muslim schools accommodate the display of religious signs and the daily rituals of those practicing their faith. Despite the opposition between public education and these private options of Diwan and Muslim schooling that exist on very small scales, the subsidizing of some of these schools is evidence of a certain amount of flexibility on the part of the French state. Although public education upholds the ideals upon which the Republic stands, the state allows for alternatives. However, these alternative forms of education, especially Muslim schools, are a sign that the public schools may be losing their historic role as tools of integration. If a Muslim student will not attend a public school because of the ban on religious signs, then a scenario of exclusion is more likely to develop than a scenario of integration.

Political manifestations of regionalism have also been a recurrent theme that has run parallel to cultural and linguistic issues. An important period for the advent of regionalism in the political arena was the Third Republic, when a contrast became apparent between the left and the right in their interpretation of the value of regional
cultures and regional identity. Republicans focused on the formation of citizens and their incorporation into French public life and reformed education to help carry out this goal. Obstacles posed by regional cultures and languages especially were seen as added challenges to the crusade. On the other hand, the new right advocated decentralization and privileged regional identity as a stepping stone to the realization of a national identity based on cultural and ethnic roots. However, the views of Barrès and Maurras also implied the exclusion of those who lacked these cultural and ethnic roots. This penchant for xenophobia and Maurras’ affiliation with the Vichy regime tainted political regionalism for some time until its rebirth on the left in connection with the events of 1968.

The distinction between the regionalism of the right, both during the Third Republic and today, and the local autonomist political parties of the left is quite marked. It seems clear that the two strains of political regionalism have developed independently of one another. Autonomist parties such as the UDB of Brittany advocate a moderate leftist platform, lobbying for local autonomy and the recognition of regional culture. The UDB is not exclusionary; for example, it clearly states in its charter that it represents *les Bretons d’origine ou d’adoption*. Regionalism is applied on a local level in order to achieve certain political and cultural goals. Conversely, the regionalism of the right is often a supporting tenet of an ideology that envisions France and/or Europe in ethnic, racial, and cultural terms.

The socio-economic makeup of current regionalist groups of the left and extreme right may be helpful in an understanding of the opposition between them. While this type
of data is not readily available in France, some broad assumptions can be made regarding their supporters. On the left, Breton regionalism is generally supported by the middle class; for example, Diwan students tend to come from families of the petite bourgeoisie, and there is likely overlap between this group and supporters of the UDB. The UDB’s moderate autonomist platform could be considered rather “mainstream,” as they often align themselves with the *Verts* or *Parti Socialiste*. The Identitaires attract a demographic more similar to that of the FN, which includes the white working class and members of the petite bourgeoisie who are threatened with downward social mobility. These individuals are likely drawn to a radical political group in search of a scapegoat for the difficulties they face, and with the Identitaires they are able to focus their discontent on non-Europeans. A marked difference between these two groups of supporters probably lies in the differing motivations in being affiliated with a political party promoting regionalism. While supporters of the UDB are ostensibly driven by an interest in increased autonomy for Brittany, supporters of the Identitaires are often driven by some form of discontent, either with their personal situations or with broader social trends. For these individuals, regional identity is simply a part of the argument in a larger political agenda, whereas it is the principle concern of leftist regionalists.

How has an examination of minority identity and its various components and manifestations in France deepened our understanding of France today? Firstly, despite a somewhat turbulent past, regional cultures and languages of France continue on, adapting, modernizing, and transforming themselves in order to retain cultural value in contemporary society. Regional languages were recently recognized in the constitution
as official parts of French cultural heritage, although they have existed within the boundaries of the French territory just as long as the French language, if not longer. The dominance of the French language and culture is strong enough that it may finally be safe to admit the existence and the value of regional languages and to celebrate regional cultures as more than just folklore.

Secondly, the Arabic language and Islam have a significant presence in French society, and although to some they seem incongruous in a country in which French language and laïcité reign supreme, permanent inroads have been made. Any discussion of minorities or identities in France is incomplete without a consideration of those with North African origins, and the challenges faced by this minority group are in some ways not so different from those faced by regional minority groups. Additionally, it is perhaps no longer possible to consider French culture today apart from the influences of Arab culture; or perhaps it is time to accept that French culture now includes aspects of once-foreign cultural elements.

Thirdly, the extreme right does not hold simply a marginal place in French politics. The advancement of Jean-Marie Le Pen to the second round of the presidential elections in 2002 was a clear sign of the progress the party had made toward the mainstream. While the Identitaire ideology seems quite radical and the movement exists on the periphery of the political spectrum, this does not mean that it does not garner support and impact the psyche of French citizens. There have been periods in France’s history, such as the Vichy regime, during which the radical right has come to power. The ideology of the FN and the Identitaires are evidence of the willingness to resort to ethnic
and/or racial conceptions of France and/or Europe as a response to fears of globalization and “Islamization.”

An important question to ask is: what is the future of Breton regionalism? Is regionalism only based on the preservation of lieux de mémoire, the concept Pierre Nora elaborates to characterize the symbolism that members of a community bestow upon elements of their past? Have certain components of Brittany’s history been incorporated into an imagined cultural identity while others have been repressed? Has regionalism transformed what were once living cultures into folkloric indulgences of the bourgeoisie? In some respects, the answer to these questions is yes; the transformation of Breton history and past ways of life into symbolically-charged lieux de mémoire fueled by nostalgia is perhaps inevitable. This was spurred by transformations in French society that included the disappearance of the peasantry, who seemed to be the last guardians of regional cultures. It is precisely this threat of disappearance that motivates the creation of lieux de mémoire, as Nora explains:

la défense par les minorités d’une mémoire réfugiée sur des foyers privilégiés et jalousement gardés ne fait que porter à l’incandescence la vérité de tous les lieux de mémoire. Sans vigilance commémorative, l’histoire les balaierait vite. Ce sont des bastions sur lesquels on s’arc-boute. Mais si ce qu’ils défendent n’était pas menacé, on n’aurait pas non plus besoin de les construire. (xxiv)

Without the threat of loss, lieux de mémoire would not be necessary; nor would regionalism have developed in France to the extent that it has.

However, Nora’s concept does not encompass the whole of Breton regionalism. In considering the extent to which Breton language and culture have been imbued with
symbolism in Brittany’s collective memory, it is easy to forget that Breton regionalism advocates a language and culture that is lived today. Parents send their children to Diwan and bilingual schools to learn a new Breton language whose cultural referents are quite different from those of the Breton once spoken in rural communities; the domain of Breton music incorporates numerous musical styles ranging from traditional Celtic instruments to a hybrid of a vast range of contemporary genres; autonomy for Brittany is supported at the political level by those who have a forward-facing vision for Brittany’s role not only in France but in the European Union. In short, Breton regionalism may be based in part on a constructed cultural identity rooted in the past, but for many individuals this cultural identity is a part of a larger identity based on innumerable modern-day social factors and is a relevant categorization alongside one’s nationality, race, gender, religion, or profession.

The pacifist nature of Breton regionalism and its emphasis on cultural renewal may make it more apt to be classified as an indulgence of the bourgeoisie than a pressing social or political matter; however, it is precisely because it is championed by the middle classes that this regionalism has cultural capital in Brittany today. It is possible that Breton regionalism can be considered both a lieu de mémoire and a relevant aspect of cultural life in Brittany; its nostalgic value has almost certainly helped motivate its renewal and reintegration into the lives of modern Bretons. Taking this into consideration, there is a future for Breton regionalism, as long as its supporters realize its continued potential for evolution and applicability to contemporary society.
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